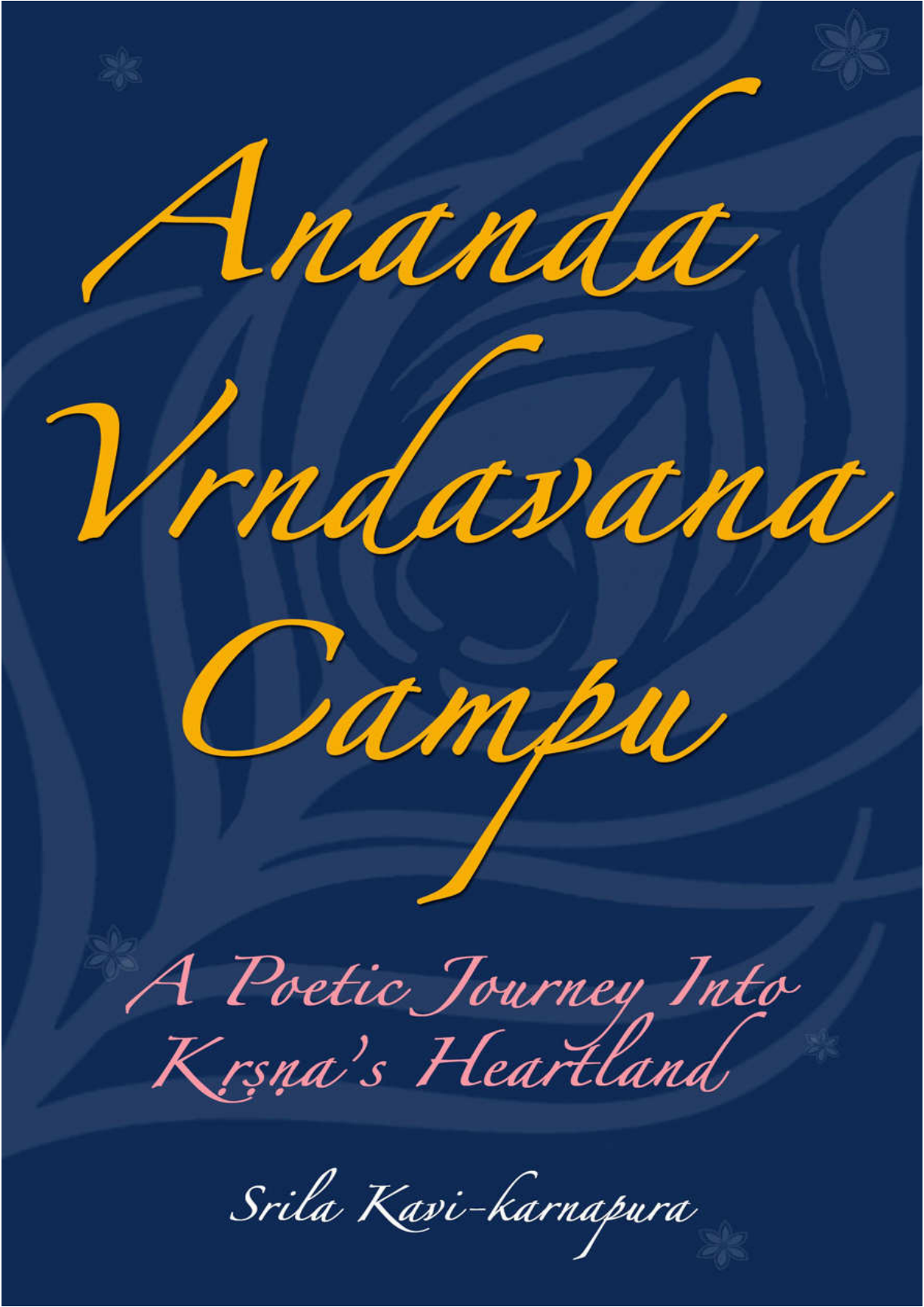




Ananda Vrindavana Campu

*A Poetic Journey Into
Kṛṣṇa's Heartland*

Srila Kavi-karnapura



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Kṛṣṇa's Heartland*

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All Glories to Sri Guru and Gauranga!

Ananda Vrndavana Campu

by Srila Kavi-karnapura

Ananda Vrndavana Campu is a fifteenth century poetic masterpiece describing the blissful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in Vrndavana.

Translators: Bhanu Swami & Subhag Swami
English Editor: Mahanidhi Swami

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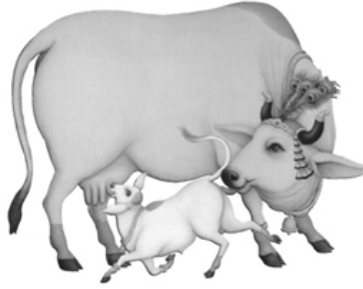
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Dedication

This English edition of *Ananda Vrndavana Campu* is dedicated to the lotus feet of my beloved spiritual master His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Srila Prabhupada often glorified Sri Kavi-karnapura and others in our exalted line of enlightened *acaryas* with such phrases as, “they were great and renowned scholars and devotees of the Lord who have prepared voluminous books and literature on the life and precepts of the Lord. Such literatures are all based on the *sastras*. They are unique in composition and unrivaled in presentation, and they are full of transcendental knowledge.

“Unfortunately, the people of the world are still ignorant of them. But when these literatures (e.g. *Ananda Vrndavana Campu*), which are mostly in Sanskrit and Bengali, come to light in the world, and when they are presented before thinking people, then India’s glory and the message of love will overflow this morbid world, which is vainly searching after peace and prosperity by various illusory methods.” (*Bhag.* Intro)

Gandharvika-Giridhari ki jai!

Acknowledgements

First I thank my Godbrothers Bhanu Maharaja and Subhag Maharaja for expertly translating this book into English in order to fulfill my desire to present this matchless gem to the devotees.

I also very much appreciate the assistance given by other devotees who helped in various ways to produce this book. I sincerely pray that Gandharvika-Giridhari will bless all these wonderful devotees with Vraja *prema-bhakti*!

Biography of Srila Kavi-karnapura

*caitanya-dāsa, rāmadāsa, āra karṇapūra
tina putra śivānandera prabhura bhakta-śūra*

“The three sons of Śivānanda Sena, named Caitanya dāsa, Rāmadāsa and Karṇapūra, were all heroic devotees of Lord Caitanya.” (Cc. Adi 10.62)

Kavi-karnapura and his illustrious father, Sivananda Sena, are both eternal associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Kavi-karnapura took *diksa* from Srinatha Pandita, a disciple of Sri Advaita Acarya.

“It is stated in *Gaura-ganoddesh dipika* (145) that the two famous parrots named Dakṣa and Vicakṣaṇa in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* became the elder brothers of Kavi-karnapura, namely, Caitanya dasa and Ramadasa. Kavi-karnapura, the third son, who was also known as Paramananda dasa or Puri dasa.” (Cc. *Adi* 10.62 p.)

“Sivananda Sena introduced his three sons to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Because they were his sons, the Lord showed the boys great mercy. Lord Caitanya asked the youngest son’s name, and Sivananda Sena informed the Lord that his name was Paramananda dasa. Once before when Sivananda Sena had visited Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu at His residence, the Lord had told him, ‘When this son is born, give him the name Puri dasa (after Paramananda Puri).’

“The son was in the womb of his wife, and when he returned home the son was born. The child was named Paramananda dasa in accordance with the Lord’s order, and the Lord jokingly called him Puri dasa. When Sivananda Sena introduced the child to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the Lord put His toe in the child’s mouth.” (Cc. *Antya* 12.45-50)

Srila Kṛṣṇa dasa Kaviraja Gosvami describes another amusing pastime of Lord Caitanya and Kavi-karnapura that occurred sometime later. “Taking his son (Kavi-karnapura), Sivananda Sena went to see Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu at His residence. He made his son offer respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of the Lord. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked the boy again and again to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, but the boy would not utter the holy

name. Although Sivananda Sena repeatedly asked his boy to speak Kṛṣṇa's holy name, the boy would not utter it.

“Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, ‘I have induced the whole world to take to the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. I have induced even the trees and immovable plants to chant the holy name. But I could not induce this boy to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.’

“Hearing this, Svarupa Damodara Gosvami began to speak. ‘My Lord,’ he said, ‘You have given him initiation into the name of Kṛṣṇa, but after receiving the *mantra* he will not express it in front of everyone. This boy chants the *mantra* within his mind, but does not say it aloud. That is his intention, as far as I can guess.’

“Another day, when Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said to the boy, ‘Recite, My dear Puridasa,’ the boy (Kavi-karnapura) composed the following verse and expressed it before everyone.” (Cc. *Antya* 16.66-73)

***śravasoh kuvalayam akṣṇor añjanam
uraso mahendra-maṇi-dāma
vṛndāvana-ramaṇīnām maṇḍanam
akhilam harir jayati***

“Sri Kṛṣṇa is the blue lotus flower on the ears of the *gopis*, the ointment for their eyes, the blue sapphire on their breasts, and all their other ornaments. May that Sri Hari be always glorified.” (Cc. *Antya* 16.74)

“Although the boy was only seven years old and still had no education, he composed such a nice verse. Everyone was struck with wonder.” (Cc. *Antya* 16.75)

The devotees became astonished upon hearing this beautiful Sanskrit verse glorifying Kṛṣṇa from such a small boy. They concluded that by sucking Mahaprabhu's toe he had received some special potency, because miracles easily manifest by the mercy of the Lord. In response to the boy's recitation, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, “My dear child! Like a great poet (*kavi*) you have so nicely described the ornament on the ear (*karna*) of the Vraja *gopis*. So from today on you will be known as Kavi-karnapura.”

Preface

From these descriptions in *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* of Mahāprabhu's intimate dealings with Kavi-karnapura one can appreciate his exalted position as a confidential, eternal associate of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. A literary masterpiece such as *Ananda Vr̥ndavana Campu* is definite proof that Mahāprabhu directly empowered Kavi-karnapura to write transcendental literature. Otherwise such a substantial work could not have been composed. Moreover, stalwart Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *acaryas* like Śrīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Thākura have lavishly praised both Kavi-karnapura and his *Ananda Vr̥ndavana Campu*. In verse seventy-one of *Vraja-riti Cintamani*, Śrīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Thākura refers to the book. "To the south is the regal, wonderfully constructed place of Rādhā-Mādhava's swing pastimes. The beauty of this place has been eloquently described in *Ananda Vr̥ndavana Campu*."

Ananda Vr̥ndavana Campu elaborately explains Kṛṣṇa's eternal Vr̥ndavana pastimes depicted in the tenth canto of *Srīmad Bhagavatam*. Beginning in Gokula with Kṛṣṇa's playing with the calves and stealing butter, the book progresses to beautifully portray Kṛṣṇa's frolicking with the cows and cowherd boys, and finally it describes His sweet, intimate pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the Vraja *gopīs*. Kavi-karnapura enriches these ever-expanding, joyful pastimes by revealing the intimate exchanges of Kṛṣṇa and His *premi bhaktas*. He discloses the wonderful dialogues and tender personal dealings that occurred during the pastimes that we all know so well such as Putana-mardana, Kālīya-līla, Govardhana-puja, and Rāsa-līla. He also offers exceptionally flavorful portrayals of some additional pastimes not mentioned in the *Srīmad Bhagavatam* such as Holi, Vamsī-caurī Līla and Jhulana Līla. Have you ever looked at a painting depicting a pastime of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma or of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* and wondered what They are feeling or what They are saying to each other? In *Ananda Vr̥ndavana Campu*, Kavi-karnapura has opened up the paintings of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes to clearly reveal just how the Lord feels and what He and His associates are talking about.

The *Srīmad Bhagavatam* is all perfect, all-blissful, and all-successful because it was penned by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the literary incarnation of the

Lord. However, the spotless *Purana*, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, became even more perfect and sweet upon emanating from the lips of Srila Sukadeva Gosvami, an eternal associate of Sri Kṛṣṇa serving Srimati Radharani as Her pet parrot in Vrndavana. Similarly, *Ananda Vrndavana Campu*, like *Srimad Bhagavatam*, has the qualities of complete bliss, success, and perfection because it was written by Kavi-karnapura, who is an eternal associate of Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, five hundred years ago, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu personally empowered Kavi-karnapura to glorify and speak about Radha and Kṛṣṇa. In one sense, because of the added sweetness and overflowing magnanimity of Sri Caitanya's touch, Kavi-karnapura's *Ananda Vrndavana Campu* is especially endowed with a unique potency to inundate everyone with a cascade of nectarean ambrosia.

In *Prema-bhakti-candrika* verse sixty, Srila Narottama dasa Thakura says *rati premamaya parabandhe*, "May I become firmly attached to the books affectionately given by the pure devotees in my tradition (Gaudiya Sampradaya) who are realized in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti-rasa*." Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura comments on this verse, "May I always be fully attached to the loving topics about Kṛṣṇa *bhakti-rasa* composed by realized *premi-bhaktas*." The word *campu* in the title of *Ananda Vrndavana Campu* means that this book is a combination of prose and perfectly composed Sanskrit poems describing the sweet beauty and blissful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in Vrndavana. Each syllable of scriptures composed by *mahajanas* such as Srila Kavi-karnapura is saturated with the *rasa* of their realizations and visions of Kṛṣṇa transcendental pastimes. Besides that, there is a wonderfully captivating power in the way such pure devotees describe Kṛṣṇa's beauty.

By regularly reading such books, a sensitive devotee will awaken a deep appreciation for Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and develop pure love for the beautiful, playful Lord of Vrndavana. This point is confirmed by Srila Kṛṣṇa dasa Kaviraja Gosvami in the *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* wherein he has written this final benediction (*phala sruti*) for the readers of *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta*:

***yebā nāhi bujhe keha, śunite śunite seha,
ki adbhuta caitanya-carita***

*kṛṣṇe upajibe prīti, jānibe rasera rīti,
śunilei baḍa haya hita*

“If one does not understand in the beginning but continues to hear again and again, the wonderful effects of Lord Caitanya’s pastimes will bring love for Kṛṣṇa. Gradually one will come to understand the loving affairs between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* and other associates of Vṛndāvana. Everyone is advised to continue to hear over and over again in order to greatly benefit. ” (Cc. *Madhya* 2.87)

Therefore by reading such transcendental books as *Ananda Vṛndavana Campu*, which was divinely inspired by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and expertly presented by Kavi-karnapura, one will be blessed with the attainment of Kṛṣṇa *prema*. We hope that all the devoted readers will derive unlimited spiritual bliss by hearing about Kṛṣṇa’s sweet, joyful pastimes in Vṛndavana.

Mahanidhi Swami
Kṛṣṇa Balarama Mandir
Vṛndavana
Putrada Ekadasi
29 December 1998

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PART I. Kaumara Lila (age: birth – 3yr 6m), Gokula, Chapters 1-6

Chapter One: Auspicious Prayers and Description of Vrndavana

I offer my respectful obeisances to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, which are bound in friendship's constant embrace to the breasts of the Vraja *gopis*, and permanently stained with their fine bodily ointments. The radiant pink color of Kṛṣṇa's foot soles comes from the *kunkuma* anointing the upper part of the *gopis*' breasts. The dark blue color of His feet originates from the musk spread on the lower part of their breasts. The waves of light emanating from His moon-like nails come from the sandalwood paste covering the middle portion of their breasts.

May the two lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Putana, always protect us. His delicate toes resemble the petals of a pink lotus flower and His slender ankles resemble the stalk of a lotus. His lotus feet hold the honey of His devotee's faith. The streams of light emanating from His toenails resemble the stamens of a lotus. The *kunkuma* powder from the budding breasts of Radhika, which clings to His foot soles, resembles the pollen of a lotus flower.

All glories to the most worshipable Lord Caitanya Kṛṣṇa Hari who is fragrant with the honey of the sweetest love. His method of worship is like a forest of golden lotuses. He is an overflowing cascade of nectarean mercy, a golden mountain of *prema*, and a lightning flash signifying victory for the cloud-like assembly of devotees.

I offer my respects to Sri Advaita Acarya, the beloved associate of Lord Caitanya, who is very affectionate to everyone, including me, and who destroys the sins of the whole world. I offer my respects to Svarupa Damodara, Raya Ramananda, and the Gosvamis headed by Rupa and Sanatana. These exalted personalities fully represent Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu because they possess the same *prema*, qualities, compassion, pleasure, and sweetness.

I offer my humble respects to Srinatha, my guru, who appeared in a *brahmana* family like the moon rising from the ocean. Being the object of Mahaprabhu's love, He was the crest-jewel of the earth. Whoever tasted the pure *Hari-katha* flowing from his mouth immediately lost all attachments to worldly pleasures, and desired only to serve Radha and Kṛṣṇa in Vrndavana.

Sri Caitanya and His eternal associates have all returned to Goloka Vrndavana, far beyond the vision of this world. Because of the absence of qualified hearers of *rasa*, the skillful writers of *rasa* have also disappeared. With them the ability to understand *rasa* and *prema* also vanished. Alas! The fragrance of perfectly composed poetry finds no shelter.

O Mother Sarasvati! How can I properly praise you? It is not possible for any living entity to describe your variegated pastimes. Although the poet may try to firmly bind you and glorify your activities with the ropes of flowery phrases and other poetic devices, such an attempt will merely inflate his pride. If by chance the binding becomes loose, then the natural meaning of the work will at once disappear.

O poets, just listen! What is the fault in verses of praise if the devotional poet uses them to bind the Lord in his heart with the ropes of affection? In answer to this he says, O Sarasvati! By your mercy we can obtain unlimited joy. Just as one worships the ocean with ocean water, similarly, we worship you with eloquent words. To repay you for the bliss you have so mercifully given, I will bathe you in the nectarean stream of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

Now Sarasvati-devi, please stay here and listen attentively. One may ask why produce a new literary work when new poets always find faults with the great works of the previous poets? One scholar will find defects in another's work, and then another learned man will find defects in his. But one should ignore the critics. Since every living entity cherishes his own life, he will not see any defects in his own actions. Similarly, although a lamp cannot illuminate its own base, it removes the darkness from four directions.

Just as smoke precedes the light of fire, similarly, a man often displays some defects before he exhibits perfection. You may say that this literary work has no other purpose than to show off my ability to overpower the

reader with poetic embellishments. However, the words of an expert poet can inspire the heart even without resorting to literary ornaments. Just as even without bathing, a person becomes purified by glancing at a sacred river. Words remain independent and faultless until the poet combines them into verses. Similarly, even though a poetic work may be endowed with attractive ornaments, qualities, and mellows, some people will only see the faults in it.

One should reject such a deceitful mentality that acts only to find faults in another. O faultfinder! O one with a deceitful tongue! You are like a sweeper man whose only job is to clean up a place full of the dirty objects discarded by others. We, therefore, are reluctant to touch you. Deceit is like finger nails or hair. In cutting or removing them no one feels any pain, and when growing they give only distress. Truly I say that a man cannot become liberated until he gives up the quality of deceit.

Now that the faultfinders have been duly warned, I, Kavi-karnapur, admit that I have written *Ananda Vrndavana Campu* for my own pleasure. Overflowing with Kṛṣṇa's sweet glories, this work will saturate the minds of thirsty *sadhakas* with immeasurable transcendental bliss. A skillfully strung garland always looks beautiful regardless of the number of flowers. And what more can be said if those flowers exude a sweet fragrance? The object of this poetic work is to inundate the reader with the fragrant qualities and pastimes of Sri Kṛṣṇa, the beautiful.

The Forest of Vrndavana

Now I will describe the form, qualities, and position of the transcendental forest of Vrndavana, which overflows with all wonderful attributes. Though the forest of Vrndavana contains the matchless essence of the majesty of Vaikuntha (*vaikuntha-saram*), there is no limit to its great sweetness (*na vai kuntasaram*). Although its splendor (*vapra-bhuta*) seems to arise from the field of *cit-sakti*, or spiritual energy, it eternally manifests in newer ways (*nava-prabhuta*) at every moment. Though it is unadulterated (*akrtakam*), it is also the giver of bliss (*krtakam*). Though it is perfect by the *svarupa-sakti* of the Lord (*prakṛti-siddham*), it is not created by the *maya-sakti* (*aprakṛti-siddhim*).

Though its form is eternal (*nitya-bhutam*), it is a dwelling place of Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates (*anitya-bhutam*), or a dwelling place consisting of spiritual elements. Though filled with sweet tasting fruits and other objects, and with varieties of *rasas* like *srngara rasa* (*su-rasa-artha*), this forest is difficult to attain for the *devatas* (*sura-sartha*). Though it is covered with wonderful trees luxuriant with verdant leaves (*vipallava*), there is not the slightest possibility of calamity or dangers. Vrndavana's trees are eternally manifested and always replete with flowers and fruits. Though these trees are the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (*lila-ayatana*), they are filled with branches (*ali-ila-yatana*) resounding with the humming of bumblebees.

Although Vrndavana is covered with many *kalpa-vrksas* (*mandara-bahulam*), it is also a pleasant place for good people (*amandaram*). It is splendid with *bakula* trees laden with leaves and fresh flowers (*navakula*). It is resplendent with *tamala* trees bending down in many rows (*nata-mala*). What more can be said of Kṛṣṇa's lovers who are like creepers endowed with the ripe fruits of their breasts that are white from the *candana* covering them and red from the scratches of their lover afflicted by the strong blows of lust. Kṛṣṇa is surrounded by His beloved *gopis* who appear like creepers of love. Similarly, Vrndavana is decorated with a variety of splendidly beautiful trees such as *tala*, *bael*, *karanja*, cinnamon, and red sandalwood. As Kṛṣṇa is full of mercy (*karuna*), the forest is full of *karuna* trees. As an assembly of sages is adorned with exalted persons like Sandilya and Lomasa, similarly, the forest of Vrndavana is decorated with trees of *bael*, *java*, *khadira*, and *jatavamsi*.

As a battlefield is decorated with the movements of foot soldiers and elephants, Vrndavana is decorated with the branches of the *pilu*, *carmi* and *karavira* trees. Just as in the battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas, Arjuna covered Bhishma's body with arrows while surrounded by soldiers like Sikhandi, Vrndavana is full of *arjuna*, *sara*, *nagakesara*, and *bhallataki* trees and abundant peacocks. As Vrndavana is full of totally liberated (*atimukta*) persons (*purusa*) devoid of all lamentation (*asoka*), it is filled with trees of *asoka*, *purusa*, and *atimukta*.

Though all the planets are present in Vrndavana, there are no inauspicious combinations of the Sun, Moon, Mars, Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Rahu or Ketu. The dazzling light of Kṛṣṇa's *sudarsana cakra* ever protects

and illuminates Vrndavana. Since it is the site of Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes, it is not destroyed by time or subject to material transformations. It is free from all disturbances. Though many intelligent devotees reside here, it is inaccessible to mundane scholars. Ignorant or lazy fellows cannot be seen here. Completely devoid of ignorance, the effulgent forest of Vrndavana grants liberation to all its inhabitants.

If someone says that in Vrndavana we see the sun and other planets just like any ordinary place, then I say that actually all these planets are spiritual, but due to the influence of the Lord's Yogamaya they appear to be material. Thus Vrndavana's effulgence is due to the supernatural power of its own spiritual Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Ketu, Rahu, and stars. Though festivals appear at every moment, Vrndavana is beyond the influence of time.

The forest of Vrndavana, which automatically nurtures good qualities within its residents, is unlimited but it appears to be only eighty-four *kosas* in circumference. Its golden trees, bushes, and creepers sparkle like emeralds. Fragrant creepers cover the golden, jewel-inlaid footpaths. Some places abound in crystal trees, bushes, and creepers standing on earth made of rubies. In other places ruby creepers entwine crystal houses, golden creepers embrace emerald trees, or emerald creepers surround golden trees. One can also see crystal creepers crawling up ruby trees, or ruby creepers embracing crystal trees.

These incredible jewel trees have branches made of other various jewels. Many types of jeweled leaves and flowers emitting unique fragrances adorn the branches. Surrounding the bases of the trees are basins of water filled by jeweled waterfalls flowing down jeweled mountains pouring out jeweled water. The basins are made of different kinds of jewels and decorated with jeweled birds.

As much as the sun sends scorching sunshine, the trees provide cooling shade. As the rays of the moon fill the mind with joy, so do the roots of Vrndavana's trees. As a cultured person is well versed in the sixty-four arts, the trees of Vrndavana are adorned with beautiful bark. As warriors are decorated with good character, the trees are adorned with beautiful branches. As an arrow is equipped with a beautiful feather, the trees are decorated with nice leaves.

As Svargaloka is resplendent with the demigods and the spring is decorated with *malati* flowers, all the trees are ornamented with beautiful, fragrant flowers. As *karma yoga* yields fruits to a flawless performer, and as an arrowhead has an iron tip, the trees of Vrndavana always provide abundant fruits. All these trees exist eternally; they have not grown from any seed. Just as *sara* trees naturally grow in groups, by Kṛṣṇa's desire the trees in Vrndavana also grow in natural clusters. Even without watering or observing any rules of arboriculture, the trees in Vrndavana produce abundant fruits and flowers.

Like a perfectly composed poem or an artistic drawing, the trees of Vrndavana display a faultless excellence. Vraja's trees always contain leaf shoots, buds, flowers, unripe, half-ripe, and fully ripened fruits at the same time. The crystal basins encircling the bases of the trees perfectly reflect the image of the trees. Though there is no water in these basins, the birds think there is, and they foolishly try to bathe there by spreading and shaking their wings and dipping in their beaks.

The glitter of the sapphire basins appears like the water of the Yamuna being moved by the wind. The trees reflected in those basins display ecstatic symptoms as their buds stand on end when they try to embrace the waves of dark blue effulgence. Bathed in the reddish light of ruby basins, some trees appear to be dyed red with *lac*, or as if the sap (*rasa*) of attraction to Kṛṣṇa is oozing out, having no room within their bodies.

Though completely spiritual and endowed with various powers, these trees as well as the Lord Himself appear to be material to the mundane eye. As women decorate themselves with designs drawn in sandalwood paste, the creepers of Vrndavana are decorated with leaves and shoots. As independent women freely embrace their young lovers, the tender creepers wrap around their favorite trees. The creepers carry the heavy weight of abundant flowers, like women bearing the pain of longing for their lovers. The joints of the creepers enhance their beauty and appear like *devas* shining in an assembly hall. Though a woman is contaminated in her period, the creepers remain pure even while flowering.

Though the creepers move in crooked ways, they show not cruelty but kindness to their leaves and flowers. Though fickle, the creepers do not display the momentary brilliance of lightning, but a permanent brilliance.

The creepers maintain their gravity even after being repeatedly kissed by the bees. The wind blows them about but they remain beyond anyone's touch. The splendid creepers of Vrndavana assist in Kṛṣṇa pastimes, and bestow a strong desire to attain the Supreme Lord.

Besides the twelve major forests of Vrndavana, there are smaller forests known as *upavanas*. In some of these forests there are small coconut trees having ripe coconuts lying at their roots. Using the roots as pillows, the coconuts seem to be sleeping comfortably. The narrow trunks of the *betel* trees resemble the slim waists of young women, and their abundant fruits hang down like a woman's heavy necklaces. The *naranga* creepers hold their clusters of ripe fruits without letting them fall to the ground. Those fruits appear like countless planets of Mars (red in color) which outshine the other planets in the sky.

The *lavalī* creepers dancing gaily in the breeze give pleasure to the eyes. Hundreds of pomegranate trees blooming with clumps of flowers add an astonishing grace to the forest. When the ripened pomegranate fruits burst open and start oozing juice, they look like an elephant's forehead dripping blood upon being clawed open by a lion. In all directions there are thousands of red flowers filled with bees. These red flowers resemble the *sindura* on young women's foreheads.

When parrots perch on the lightweight boughs of flowers, they hang down to form natural arches. Afflictions such as hunger, thirst, illusion, old age, disease and death are forever absent in these transcendental arbors. Sweet sap flows continuously from plentiful date trees. Dried grass, leaves, and other debris cannot be found on the forest floor. Clusters of grapevines and many attractive groves wait to fulfill the desires of Vraja's youthful *gopis*.

Fruit bearing *syama* creepers add a pleasant sight to the forest. The *kamaranga* trees, with their lavish supply of fruits, look like men performing actions to attain heaven. Apsaras like Rambha, cavorting in the celestial courtyards, have shapely thighs like the trunks of banana trees that grow throughout Vrndavana's forests. Towering *tala* trees ornament the forest scenery, just as a variety of pleasant rhythms (*talas*) accent a song. Ripe jackfruits ready to fall saturate the forest air with a heady fragrance, like *karmic* workers waiting to descend from heaven after tasting the ripened fruits of many sacrifices. Bountiful *bilva* trees appear like numerous

dancers in a theatrical performance. The black *jama* trees diminish the light of the forest, as the *jambu* trees on Jambudvipa reduce the effulgence of Mount Meru. As Badarikasrama shelters the ascetic worshipers of Narayana, these forests shelter many *jujube* orchards.

The Seasons of Vrndavana

The transcendental forest of Vrndavana exists beyond the reaches of time. Yet it is divided into six sections to display the six seasons. Though resembling their material counterparts, the six seasons of Vrndavana are completely transcendental since they nourish the spiritual bliss of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. The six seasons are known as: the joy of monsoon, the pleasure of autumn, the satisfaction of winter, the happiness of the dewy season, the beauty of spring, and the auspicious season of summer.

The Monsoon Season

During monsoon season the constant torrential rain showers resemble the intense pleasure derived from rendering pure, unalloyed devotional service. As a self-realized person becomes illumined with the eternal light of bliss, this season illumines the sky with flashes of flickering lightning which satisfy the heart. The sorrowful wailing of the peacocks reminds one of Parvati's intense yearning to reunite with Siva. Clamoring *dahuka* birds mimic the conflicting arguments found in books of logic. As Garuda is eternally endowed with strong wings, the season eternally echoes with the cries of *cataka* birds.

Arjuna trees appear like a second sun to brighten all directions with their bold red flowers. Rain showers during particular *naksatras* summon effulgent emeralds appearing like tender shoots of grass. The *camuru* deer mistake the emeralds for shoots of grass and try to nibble on them. When the *indragopa* (tiny red insects) crawl on these emeralds, they appear like tiny rubies moving across a green bodice stretched across the breast of the earth. *Kadamba* flowers fill the air with a sweet herbal aroma. Due to the constant pouring of misty rain, the air always feels cool and refreshing.

The monsoon season personified exhibits various symptoms of transcendental joy. Blossoming *malati* flowers provoke the earth to laughter. The trees horripilate with *kadamba* buds, and the sky is pleasant

with ecstatic tears dripping from the rain clouds. The forehead of the monsoon season is decorated with the *tilaka* mark of the *indadhanu* creeper. The petals of golden *ketaki* flowers, more brilliant than lightning, decorate her dark hair. A garland of *balaka* flowers hangs from her neck to rest upon the newly formed bulging clouds of her raised breasts.

The rumbling clouds sound like *cataki* birds crying in anguish, “Please give us rain and save our lives.” The clouds answer, “Do not lament, I will rain now.” The thundering clouds sound like a revolving grinding stone powdering a man’s pride. The deep growl of the clouds sounds like a *mrdanga* imitating the dancing of a love-intoxicated peacock, or the alluring chanting of *mantras* by a woman separated from her lover’s embrace.

The monsoon season abounds with a symphony of sounds. Everywhere *cataka* birds call, *tithi* birds chirp, *daduri* birds cry, peacocks wail piteously, clouds roar, and raindrops pitter-patter. The melody of these sweet sounds is just suitable for lulling a woman to sleep after enjoying her lover.

The nourishing waters of this season beautify all the trees and gardens. The abundant ripened fruits of the mango trees tint the center of the forest with a golden glow. Surrounding this area is a blackish aura created by the ripe *jama* fruits. Beyond this lies a pale yellow effulgence produced by the sharp, needle-like leaves and flowers of the *ketaki* tree. With all these colorful hues the gardens of Vrndavana appear as beautiful as a painting.

The Autumn Season

The splendorous season of autumn is characterized by lakes full of deep blue water filled with red lotus flowers that look like the lotus feet of Visnu being caressed by the loving lotus hands of Laksmi. Brimming with water, these lakes are as clean and pure as the sinless heart of a devotee aspiring for *prema*. As Narayana is beautified by the presence of the joyful Goddess of Fortune, similarly, the autumn lakes are beautified by the presence of *cakravaka* birds and blossoming lotuses.

Groups of lazy swans sport freely in the lakes. Gliding along the water, they resemble liberated souls (*paramahamsas*) swimming in the ocean of spiritual bliss. The cooing herons appear to be echoing the tales of Rama and Lakshmana. Blue lotuses please everyone with their splendid fragrance,

spreading through the land like the fame of the all-attractive Lord. The white lotuses (*pundarika*) ornamenting the lakes are like the elephant Pundarika who decorates the Southeast direction. The bees ravage the honey of the *kumuda* lotuses growing in the lake, just as they enjoy the liquid oozing from the body of Kumuda, the elephant of the Southwest direction. Red lotuses cast their colors across the autumn lakes like the setting sun coloring the evening sky with its pastel pinks.

Like an impassioned lady, the autumn season holds these lakes, the reservoirs of all beauty, to her chest in love. The autumn moon shines brilliantly like a glinting sword unsheathed before battle. As *dharma* fully manifests in Satya-yuga, the bulls, as representatives of religion, manifest a type of madness during this season as they turn every field into a playground. The large lakes of this season are very beautiful with warm water on their surfaces and cool water within. They resemble a peaceful man who keeps cool within, even when harassed by the words of a fool. The rows of brilliant wispy clouds adorning the autumn sky look like sandalwood paste on the limbs of the directions personified as women. These cloud wisps appear like the white scarf of a young woman waving in the breeze, or cotton fluff carried by the winds personified as young girls.

When the groups of pure white clouds reflect in the Yamuna, it appears like a brilliant white sandbar in the middle of the river, or that the Ganga (which is greenish-white in color) has taken shelter of the Yamuna to gain the fortune of bathing Kṛṣṇa. Three wonderful features fill the autumn season with bliss, namely the fragrant pollen from blooming lotuses, the directions becoming darkened from swarms of bees maddened by the intoxicating fragrance of the *chatina* tree, and the wind driven clouds moving like freely roaming elephants.

The autumn season can be seen as a beautiful woman whose waist-belt is the cooing herons, whose ankle-bells are the sonorous quacking of the ducks, whose breasts are the *cakravaka* birds, whose moon-like face is the half-blooming lotuses, whose eyes are the blue lotuses, whose eyebrows are the fickle bees, and whose attractive garments are the pollen from various flowers.

When the mud (*kardama*) dries up this season becomes blissful with the sight of the faces of many brown calves (*kapilas*). Similarly, when Kardama

Muni renounced his home, Devahuti took pleasure in seeing the face of her son Kapiladeva. This season is like a king who has a flower bed in the middle of a forest of land lotuses. Its canopy is the sky overhead sparkling with the constellations. Its *camara* whisks are the swaying of the tall *kasa* flowers.

In the monsoon season, the elephants of the directions jump on the clouds and push them down so that the sky appears to touch the treetops. On the other hand, when the tree branches become free of these clouds, it seems the elephants of the directions have departed. In their absence the space above the trees increases.

The Hemanta Season (early winter)

The sweet fragrance of *maha-saha* flowers characterizes the early winter season. Just as Arjuna is dear to Madhusudana, similarly, this season, with its blossoming *arjuna* trees, is very dear to *madhusudana* (the honeybees). Yellow *jhinti* flowers add additional splendor. Just as Siva protected Banasura, the son of Bali, similarly, this season gives shelter to the blue *jhinti* flowers. Just as Mt. Kailasa holds Siva and Parvati, this season supports the shining *lodhra* tree.

Sukadeva, the son of Vyasa, spoke the verses of *Bhagavata* in many sweet tunes, similarly, this season resounds with the mellifluous cries of many happy *sukas* (parrots.) *Haritala* birds give life to the season with their phenomenal speaking abilities just as Harita Muni propounded the *Ayur-Veda*. Just as a moment (*lava matra*) of *sadhu-sanga* removes false ego and gives one bliss, the presence of the *lava* birds in this season brings great joy to all. Just as a devotee of the Lord attains peace by the strength of his worship, similarly, the bodies of water in early winter gradually become cool from the soft footsteps of the approaching cold season.

The lotuses decrease in number and the nights gradually increase in length. There is no fault in this, however, because the *gopis* rejoice during the long winter nights. Everyone enjoys the brief morning hours touched by the weakened rays of the sun. The female deer, thinking it is the rays of the rising sun, become joyful for a short time upon seeing the ruby studded earth. The deer, thinking them to be the cool rays of the moon, avoid the areas filled with bright crystal gems.

What more can be said? Frightened by the cold season, Surya Bhagavan, the sun-god, retreats to the Southeast corner and the lotuses disappear. Female *camaru* deer glance about and wander here and there. Sometimes they mistake the emeralds lying on the ground to be fresh sprouts of barley. The astonished eyes of the deer resemble the doe-eyed *gopis* of Vrndavana. Frost competes with the heat of the sun for sovereignty over the earth. When the frost increases, the heat of the sun retreats, and when the heat of the sun increases the frost retreats. Love pangs increase in the breasts of unmarried girls during the long winter nights. Whereas, the married *gopis* avoid the pains by willingly accepting the loving advances of their husbands.

Pearl ornaments, being cold by nature, do not adorn the gorgeous *gopis* at this time. But they do decorate their hair with *kurubaka* flowers, and rub pollen from *lodhra* flowers into it. *Maha-saha* flower garlands hang across their budding breasts. Saffron ointments, which heat the body, serve as cosmetics. Heavy clouds of incense fill the pastime cottages and heating spices enhance the *tambula*. Throughout the Hemanta season the *gopis* refrain from mentioning any object reminding them of cold.

The Dewy Season

During the dewy season the *dupahariya* flowers blossom, reminding one of the happiness felt upon the arrival of a good friend. As Visvakarma moves the sun around the zodiac, the *kunda* flowers begin blooming. Vaikunthanatha dominates the demons in the same way as the new *damanaka* flowers dominate this season. Just as a downpour satisfies the cranes inhabiting the dry lands, similarly, the appearance of the fragrant *marubak* flower brings happiness to all.

Just as the ever-increasing glories of Ramacandra ornamented the battle of Sri Lanka, the brightness of the dewy days increases at every moment to decorate the season. The welcome rays of the Sun increase the joy of all by chasing away the chill. Leaving its southern course, the Sun proceeds northward like a person renouncing his wife to follow the path of self-discovery.

The mist rising from the ponds, rivers, and canals looks like effulgent rays coming from hidden underwater jewels. Young female deer mistake it for

smoke and assume the water is on fire. While looking at the splendid rising sun, the young deer become stunned and stop eating and drinking. Out of stupidity they take the sun to be a blazing fireball, and see the dew drops on the grass as pearls dropped in their grazing grounds. Surya-deva's gentle touch gradually dissolves the dew and the mist.

Dense foliage overhead prevents accumulation of dew beneath the tall luxuriant trees. In the evening handsome bucks sit beneath these trees and ruminate without the fear of cold. The setting sun appears like a glowing hot iron ball sinking into the water and giving off steam. Birds cry out as they flee from the darkness. Without talking to their mates, they sleep comfortably amidst the lush growth of the beautiful trees. Due to the cold, the *cakora* birds cease flying in the rays of the moon.

Lovers ponder sleeping blissfully in deep embraces. The long nights favor extended conversations as the rush to sleep recedes. The *gopis* give up cosmetics like *kunkuma* that obstruct a lover's closeness. The loving embraces of husbands and wives produce pleasant sensations. Although the season brings biting cold, the warmth of love prevents the pain.

Lotuses cannot bloom in this season. In the morning the women of Vrndavana, who are endowed with good qualities, warm up their backs by exposing them to the sun. *Bandhujiva* garlands adorn their hair, *damanaka* leaves hang from their ears, and *kundakoraka* garlands lie on their chests. As previously mentioned, they do not wear any pearl jewelry at this time of the year.

The Spring Season

Mango trees laden with new buds announce the arrival of spring. The sight is as pleasing as the union of lovers instigated by fresh longing. Blossoming *madhavi* creepers appear along the pathways, as a *sadhaka* sometimes sighs while traversing the path of self-realization. *Asoka* trees exploding with splendid red flowers drive away all lamentation, like the Lord's devotees who have transcended the misty coverings of hankering and lamenting. The clumps of fresh buds on the *kancana* trees appear like groups of famous *pandits* studying the scriptures.

The groves of *betel* trees look like groups of mad elephants in great contingents bent on war. Sweet scented *mandara* trees add more beauty to

the season. These trees appear like intoxicated men sauntering about after drinking liquor. Cuckoos play about the trees, like the restless monkeys in Ramacandra's phalanx. Lingering in the air is the fine scent of clove trees fleeing like the happiness derived from material pleasures.

The large numbers of *bakula* trees appear like the strong men serving in the dynasty of Ikṣvaku. Creepers of blooming *mallika* flowers beautify the landscape, just as the seven notes embellish the musical scale. Flowering *karira* trees fill the air with an intoxicating aroma, like the liquid flowing from the heads of love crazed elephants. Flower scented breezes accent the spring season, just as lust agitates a materially attached man.

Moon rays increase their brilliance with the departure of the cold, and embrace the spring nights like a person delivered from death. While the springtime moon glistens sweetly in the clear skies above, the young *gopis* enjoy sweet pastimes in the groves below. When the soft breezes caress the sweet fragrances within the groves, the *gopis* come to gather flowers. Attracted by the beauty of the unlimited flowers on the trees, playful Kṛṣṇa, wearing a golden necklace, attains the height of bliss from seeing the *gopis* in their prime of youth.

Dense swarms of humming bees, eager to taste the pollen of lotuses, darken the sky as they speed toward the flowers. But seeing the bees bypass them, the lotus flowers argue among themselves, "Why not drink from me first? Have I committed any offense to you?" Though the flowers offer their pollen to the bees, the bees do not accept. Instead they become intoxicated by smelling the fragrance from the lotus mouths of the Vraja *gopis*, whose hearts overflow with intense feelings of love.

Seeing the *palasa* trees devoid of leaves, the bees conjecture, "What happened to the *palasa* groves? They are as dry as a parrot's beak." What else can be said? In this season, the cuckoos, truly the embodiments of primordial sound, open their beaks to taste the mango and then begin to coo. At this time, the bees inside the mango buds come out to take rest.

The best of the maddened elephants roams about with the intoxicated *gopis* of Vraja whose sweet whispering defeats the soothing sound of running water. The cuckoos resound like a bell to announce their arrival. Spring personified looks attractive with her beautiful *nagakesara* flower earrings,

madhavi creeper neck jewelry, *malati* flowers adorning her breasts, red *palasa bindu*, *campaka* flower bodice, and a red *asoka* flower sash around her waist. Various types of tiny creepers appear at this time of year, which smile with their glittering flowers, cry tears of love in the form of dripping honey nectar, and horripilate with new buds.

The Summer Season

Blossoming *sirisa* trees announce the arrival of the summer season. They make Vrndavana look like the land of Kasmir, which abounds in colorful flowers giving fragrance throughout the year. Happy *mallika* ducks cruise along the brimming lakes. Just as golden ripe paddy beautifies the autumn season, similarly, the fully blossomed *patala* flowers add a special splendor to the summer season.

The flowering *kutaja* trees appear like the joyful playgrounds of Lord Indra. *Satapatraka* birds highlight the season, just as blossoming lotuses decorate a lake. Just as smoke on a mountain infers the presence of a fire, similarly, the sighting of *phinga* birds indicates the arrival of the auspicious summer season. As the majestic King Virocana illuminated the dynasty of Prahlada, similarly, the sun shines brightly at this time.

Just as Vaisnavas attain relief from material distress by attaining the lotus feet of Visnu, similarly, the cooling rays of the moon give great relief from the scorching heat of day. Devotees of the Lord find joy by absorbing themselves in His humble service, just as one finds happiness by taking a cool bath in summer. One's sins gradually diminish in the association of devotees. Similarly, the length of nights gradually decreases in the presence of summer. As everyone in the universe can find pleasure by serving Lord Hari, similarly, every living entity relishes the pleasant breezes of summer. Pious people derive full satisfaction by spending money on their loved ones. By applying substances such as sandalwood pulp one feels immense pleasure in this season.

Due to the fatal threat of hot sweat, coolness flees from all directions and takes shelter in the fortress of the *gopis'* breasts. To find relief from the intense heat, the creepers and trees fan each other by slowly moving their twigs and branches. Mercy manifests in the cool water flowing in the jeweled basins below the shady trees. As a host carefully tends to his

guests, the summer offers these cooling basins to attentively serve its birds and beasts. In the same way that pious gentlemen provide for the needy, the shady trees relieve everyone from the heat of summer.

The streams of water flowing from the tops of the jeweled mountains extinguish the fiery heat caused by the harsh rays of the *suryakanta* jewels. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis*, their ankle-bells chiming sweetly, hold hands as they meander along the cool forest paths under the shady trees. Summer sends scorching hot winds that make one feel he is breathing poison filled air. Not finding any abatement from the heat by contacting the bodies of water, the wind tries to touch the cool fragrance residing in breasts of the *gopis*.

Besides beautifying the night, the summer moon brings full satisfaction to all. Due to the intense suffering experienced everyday, the very word “daytime” instills fear in the heart. But everyone appreciates the cool nights of summer. In this way the summer is glorified. Amidst the lotus flowers in the lake there is a houseboat covered with a canopy trimmed with hanging pearls that shake in the wind. It is sprayed by a mist scented with fine particles of camphor, and buffeted by the pleasant winds of *camaras* waved by loving attendants. Radhika and Kṛṣṇa sleep in blissful reverie within that charming houseboat.

The summer finds Sri Hari wearing a strand of large pearls bordering His hairline and forehead. His shimmering golden *dhoti* blows in the wind. Garlands of *mallika* buds, cooling flower ornaments, and sandalwood paste adorn His attractive transcendental form. As embodiments of the summer season, the *gopis* are decorated with ear ornaments of *sirisa* flowers, crowns of *patala* flowers, garlands of *mallika* flowers, and bracelets of *kutaja* flowers. At the end of the day the *gopis* and the flower-filled forest of Vrndavana serve the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

The Six Seasons of Vrndavana

Six distinct seasons manifest in Vrndavana plus three seasons appearing in pairs as autumn and winter, dewy and spring, summer and monsoon. In this way Vrndavana features nine seasonal forests. But actually ten seasonal divisions exist in Vrndavana (the six different seasons, the three combinations, and the six seasons at once).

In the tenth forest (all six seasons at once) the youthful *gopis* take fresh *kadamba* flowers from the rainy season and fix them in their hair parts. They twirl autumn season lotuses in their petal like fingers, smear the pollen of winter *lodhra* flowers on their cheeks, and put *bandhuli* flowers from the dewy season around their necks. They place bunches of *asoka* buds from the spring over their ears, and entwine *mallika* garlands in their hair from the summer season. Everyday the Vraja *gopis* beautifully decorate themselves like this to worship their beloved Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The ever-increasing natural beauty of the forest *kunjas* rivals majestic houses made of priceless jewels. The sweet sounds of bees and cuckoos echo through the *kunjas* that are lit by phosphorescent vines. Musk deer scent the air and *camari* cows clean the forest floor with their bushy tails.

The Yamuna River

The famous river Yamuna flows through the Vrndavana forest like a garland of blue lotuses, a moat of *kajala*, a dark blue *sari*, or a necklace of blue sapphires around the neck of Vrnda-devi, the presiding deity of Vrndavana. Though agitated with waves, the Yamuna holds unlimited lotus flowers in her pure waters, and always gives *premananda* to the devotees. Herons continually play in her waters and delighted fish swim in large schools. Yamuna grants happiness to anyone who surrenders to her or bathes in her sacred waters.

Yamuna is resplendent with a multi-colored bodice composed of the many tiny *saivala* creepers floating on her surface. The male and female *cakravaka* birds form her breasts. Her colorful dress is composed of the pollen from white lotuses. A swarm of meandering bumblebees serves as her hair braid. She has blue lotus eyes, red lotus lips, and a face of blooming lotuses. Her hips are her wide banks decorated with a belt of herons. Sonorous geese sing as her ankle-bells. Yamuna-devi, the personification of bliss, worships Kṛṣṇa by constantly offering Him lotus flowers with her fickle wave-like hands.

The flower-filled trees on her banks reflect in the water to appear like a second blossoming forest. Seeing the reflections of birds in the water, the foolish fish come there and nibble at them. At night when they see the reflections of the stars on the water the small fish, mistaking them for food,

swim up to the surface and try to eat them. The shimmering white banks of the Yamuna appear like streams of camphor, or attractive lightning flashing in the dark, or sandalwood paste smeared on the limbs of Vrnda-devi, or *malati* garlands in the braid of a woman.

On these banks stand flowerbeds situated between emerald green strips of grass. Attractive *kunjās* and many beautiful sub-forests containing *cintamani* cottages also line the Yamuna's banks. Parrots, cuckoos, *cakoras*, and water birds such as ducks, herons, *sararis*, *kuraris*, and *cakravakas* move about the courtyards surrounding these *cintamani* cottages singing happily. They appear like a group of *rasika* devotees discussing the delightful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Bathing *ghatas* made of rubies, coral, emeralds, and *vaidurya* gems line the Yamuna's shores. These *ghatas* appear like the embodiment of auspiciousness.

The four tall trees forming the corners of the forest cottages have many leafy branches that hang down to make natural canopies. Two creepers wind around each of these trees to appear like a pair of embracing lovers. The creepers entangle with their flowers, leaves, and fruits to make a wonderful sight. Flowering creepers comprise the walls of the pastime cottages. The entwined branches of various creepers form the cottage doors that are surrounded by other fragrant creepers. Varieties of colorful flowers hang down to make the domes above the cottages. Dangling flower creepers move as natural *camara* fans.

The Glories of Govardhana

An exquisite line of mountains called Govardhana stretches down the middle of Vrndavana. Giriraja's thousands of peaks appear like the thousands of hands and feet of the *purusa avatara*. Many smaller hills surround these peaks, and many jeweled plateaus and lakes like Radha-kunda provide additional beauty. In this way Giriraja appears just like a romantic hero decorated with many jeweled bracelets and earrings. Just as Giriraja contains many minerals (*dhatus*) of red clay and arsenics, similarly, the Sanskrit language features a variety of word roots (*dhatus*).

By the Lord's grace Dhruva traveled beyond Maharloka. Similarly, by the mercy of the Lord, Govardhana has surpassed the splendor of Vaikuntha and become famous as the best of mountains. Just as Kartikeya, the

commander who is difficult to conquer, supports the king of heaven, Govardhana holds many difficult to enter caves. Many snakes surround the valuable sandalwood trees adorning the Malaya Mountain, but there are no snakes guarding the unlimited treasures found on Govardhana Hill.

Lord Siva holds the moon in his topknot, but Giriraja's peaks touch the moon. Siva is fearsome, but Govardhana is kind and gentle. As Kṛṣṇa is adorned with forest garlands that reach to His ankles, Govardhana is decorated with long lines of forests. Cascading waterfalls caress all sides of Govardhana. Bhu-mandala is made pleasant by the Loka-loka mountain range, whereas Govardhana pleases the eyes of all devotees. Govardhana is made glorious by *banyan* trees that distribute joy to everyone. The interiors of its caves are the embodiments of bliss. It is Govardhana's nature to protect the deer and other forest creatures.

Mt. Kailasa, Mt. Meru, or even the best of metaphors cannot compare with the unlimited glories of Govardhana. Kailasa is composed of silver, and golden Mt. Meru is born of the material nature. They pale in comparison with Govardhana, which is eternally manifested, and made of inconceivably precious jewels.

Just as dancers enhance the sweetness of theatrical performances, the *sonalu* trees increase the sweetness of seeing Govardhana Hill. The streams flowing by the roots of the many sandalwood trees growing there pick up the divine fragrance and pass it on to the valleys and grass growing on Govardhana. When all the different animals such as *rurus*, *camaras*, *gavayas*, *gandharvas*, *srmaras*, *rohisas*, *sasa*, and *sambaras* bathe in the parrot-green colored streams flowing under the densely foliated green trees they appear to be made of emeralds. No one can tell whether they are real animals or made out of green jewels.

The crystal rocks of Govardhana reflect the blue rays of its sapphires to appear like Balarama dressed in blue cloth. The large emeralds reflecting the golden rocks look like Narayana adorned in His golden *dhoti*. The yellow sapphire platforms standing on beds of diamonds appear like Siva and Gauri. The waterfalls pouring over the emerald cliffs look like Lord Rama carrying His curved bow. The ruby platforms standing on silver bases appear like Brahma mounted on his swan. The clear waterfalls rapidly falling from the tall peaks of Govardhana carry the reflections of many

multi-colored jewels and appear like long rainbows. The light coming from the various stones and jewels in the plateaus reflect in the sky like a rainbow. The effulgence from the peaks of *vaidurya* gems appears like the tail of a comet streaking over Govardhana, or like a flock of flying gray birds.

Govardhana offers many thrones made of cooling stones for the sitting pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. Its flat, jeweled-studded areas await to serve Kṛṣṇa's *rasa* dance. Its wonderful caves look more enchanting than temples made of jewels. For serving Kṛṣṇa there are many flower canopies that pour down fragrant pollen when shaken by the wind. The dense cool forests provide soothing relief from the hot sun. Animals such as deer and tigers live there in peace and harmony.

The Glories of Nandisvara

Not far from Govardhana stands Nandisvara Hill, which is the second body of Lord Siva. *Dhava* trees and the blissful pastimes of Madhava fill Nandisvara with splendor. The parrots perched in the *palasa* trees vibrate sweet music throughout the day. Beautiful peaks of varying heights decorate its skyline. An abundance of roots, herbs, and delicious fruits await the eager hands of the carefree cowherd boys. Just as Vamana's steps brought the Ganga down on Siva's head, similarly, the water flowing down from its caves nourishes the fennel shrubs growing on the side of Nandisvara Hill.

As gentle behavior can break the pride of a coarse man, the thick growth of yellow *jinthi* flowers growing on its slopes overpowers the red-colored rocks of Nandisvara Hill. Lord Siva always holds Parvati on his lap, and this mountain always holds *silajit* in its crevices. The splendid capital of Nanda Baba rests atop Nandisvara Hill. In this place the syllable *khala* (deceitful) is only found in words such as *mekhala*, *srnkhala*, and *ulukhlala*. This syllable, however, is never used alone because there are no deceitful people in Nanda Maharaja's capital.

The word *matsara* (my lake) is used to describe one's own lake, but it is not used to describe envy (*matsarya*) because this place is devoid of envy. The word *dosakara* (having faults) is used to describe the moon and nothing else because there are no *dosakara* (faulty) people in Nandisvara. The

syllable *mala* (dirt) is used only in such words as *parimala* (fragrance) and *syamala* (blackish), but it is not used separately to connote *mala* (filth), because everything there is *nirmala* (pure and spotless). The word *danda* (rod) is used only to connote the handle of a *camara* or an umbrella, but it does not connote punishment (*danda*) because there are no punishable people there.

The word *bandha* (knot or bound) is used only to describe the knots of clothing, but it does not mean imprisoned (*bandha*) because no one here deserves to be tied up. The word *panka* (mud) is used only to describe cosmetics like *kunkuma* and *candana*, because there is no mud there. The word *adhi* (mental distress) is used only in such words as *samadhi* and *upadhi*, because there is no such thing as mental distress there. The word *pidha* (anguish, or group) is seen only in such words as *kusumapidha* (flower chaplet), because there is no pain or agony in Nandisvara.

The word *kutila* (crooked) is used only to refer to hair locks or one's glances, because there are no crooked or deceitful people there. The word *cancalata* (greedy or unsteady) is used only in relation to necklaces or the edge of clothing which move back and forth in anticipation of meeting Kṛṣṇa. It is not used in reference to unsteadiness of the mind because there are no unsteady people there. The word *raga* is used only to describe the reddish color of the feet and hands, and not to describe material attachments.

The word *madhya* (middle, mediocre) is used only to describe the waist, because everything in the spiritual world is *uttama* (topmost). The word *palita* (white) is used only to describe a *pala* (measurement), and not to describe white hair because no one grows old there. The word *raja* is used only in words describing flower pollen, or the dust of a cow, and not in words like *raja-guna* because there are no passionate people there. The word *tama* (darkness) is used only to describe darkness, and not to refer to *tama-guna* (ignorance), because ignorance cannot be found.

The word *kathina* (hard) is used to describe jewels and gold, and not to refer to people because everyone is very soft and gentle. The words *dvandva* (pairs, argument) is used to refer to a couple of people, and not to an argument because there are no arguments. The word *manda* (gentle) is used only to refer to the wind, and not with such words as *manda-bhagya*

(unfortunate), because there are no unfortunate people there. The word *ksinata* (thin, decrease) refers to the waists of young ladies, and it is not used elsewhere, because everything is always increasing in Nandagrama. The word *cancalya* (fickleness) refers only to the movements of the eyes, because everyone there is very *sthira* (steady).

The words *glani* (exhaustion), *sanka* (worry), *dainya* (low, misery) and *visada* (lamentation) are used only to describe the ecstatic states within *bhava*, and not elsewhere because there are no material conditions of exhaustion, worry, and so on there. The word *chidra* (hole, or faults) is only used to describe the holes in a flute or a pearl, but it is not used to describe people because there are no faulty people. The word *tiksnata* (sharp) is used only to describe glances and nothing else.

The word *katuta* (pungent, bitter) is used only in relation to particular spiritual emotional states and not elsewhere. The word *samanya* (ordinary, similarity) is only used to describe the similarity of objects, because there is nothing ordinary about Nandisvara. The word *durvarna* (low quality, impurity) is used only to describe impurity in metals, because there are no low class people there. Although all the people of Nandisvara appear to exhibit temporary qualities such as youth and old age to facilitate their individual *rasas*, they are actually all liberated souls. Their so-called youth and old age are beyond the transformations of time.

A high insurmountable wall appearing like the glow of the dawn surrounds all the smaller towns that comprise Nanda Maharaja's capital. The main gateways are huge, jewel-studded doors. These towns appear like festive arenas with canopies and colorful jeweled festoons hanging from the archways. Just as Surya-deva has many large horses shining like diamonds, similarly, Nandisvara is full of broad sparkling roadways. Just as the dancing of Siva induces happiness, the sight of its many huge palaces brings joy to the heart.

The many small, attractive temples appear as radiant as the rising sun. Their brilliant golden rooftops rival the splendorous yellow cloth of Lord Narayana. Beautiful strands of pearls hang from the cornices. The pinnacles of the rooftops drive away all fear. Just as the *cakora* birds eagerly drink the rays of the moon, similarly, the effulgence of the moonstones forming the edges of the rooftops attracts the *cakora* birds. The jewel-studded verandas

surrounding the palaces appear like glittering mountains of jewels. The sacrificial arenas of the palaces are adorned with flower garlands that resemble Lord Siva accompanied by his decorated wife Parvati.

Amongst all the towns, Nanda's village is the chief. The town wall is made of sapphires and the houses are made of emeralds. The golden rooftops, coral pillars, crystal walls, cat's eye towers, sapphire sitting platforms, and huge doors studded with large blue sapphires astound the eye with their beauty. The stunning opulence of Nandisvara puts to shame the brilliant palaces of the demigods.

When the pet parrots make friends with the sculpted parrots standing on the jeweled walls, the delighted women cannot tell them apart. In their bewilderment, they offer pomegranate seeds to the sculpted parrots instead of the real ones.

Nanda Maharaja, the king of Vrndavana, resides in this town as the embodiment of paternal affection. Manifesting the pure nature of the soul, he is the essence of all auspiciousness, a veritable island amidst an ocean of bliss. By assuming the role of Kṛṣṇa's father, which he plays eternally, he has become endowed with all auspicious qualities. His wife Yasoda resides in Nandisvara as the embodiment of maternal affection acting like a desire creeper offering the *darsana* of Kṛṣṇa. As a beautiful flower spreads its fragrance in all directions, the effulgence of Yasoda's fame illuminates her entire dynasty.

Hundreds of honest and gentle cowherd men live in this capital city. They are not attached to their families, but they are completely attached to Kṛṣṇa. Although they diligently care for their domestic animals and maintain themselves by trading in milk and yogurt, they exist totally in the spiritual world. A few of the cowherd men are intimate relatives of Nanda Maharaja, but all them are closely related to each other.

The husbands embody religious principles and the wives embody devotional feelings. Their sons are Kṛṣṇa's cowherd boyfriends and their daughters are His dearest lovers. Like the four Kumaras, all of Kṛṣṇa's friends are eternally youthful. As flocks of birds decorate a forest, Kṛṣṇa is surrounded by friends of the same age. Kṛṣṇa and His friends have a very close and intimate relationship resembling the intimacy of flowers strung on

a thread. Just as autumn lakes appear clear and joyous and the dynasty of Brhaspati shines with glory, similarly, the blissful boyfriends of Kṛṣṇa have clear eyes and brilliantly effulgent hair.

With their musk and sandal scented bodies Kṛṣṇa's associates look as beautiful as Supratika, the elephant who holds up the Northeast corner. Blossoming lotuses give pleasure in the autumn season, but the smiling lotus faces of Kṛṣṇa's boyfriends bring happiness at all times. The well-proportioned ears of the boys resemble perfectly arranged melodies. With their elegantly shaped noses the boys smell the wonderful fragrances of Vṛndavana's flowers. The eyes of the cowherd boys flit about like the fickle movements of the spots on a gambler's dice. Their handsome and resplendent necks stand out distinctively like Sugriva radiating amongst Rama's legions of monkey soldiers.

Their long, beautiful arms rival the trunks of baby elephants. Like the ever-increasing waves of the milk ocean, the chests of the boys are always swelling with happiness. The waists of the boys are as firm as the sides of an elephant. Kṛṣṇa's friends have very strong thighs that give joy to everyone. They walk on their bare feet, which are as tender as the rays of the moon. The cowherd boys of Vṛndavana far surpass the demigods, and they exist eternally as Kṛṣṇa's beloved associates. Subala, Sridama, Sudama, and Vasudama are some of Kṛṣṇa's intimate boyfriends.

Now the intimate girlfriends of Kṛṣṇa will be described. The delicate feet of Kṛṣṇa's *gopis* resemble poetry full of wonderful rhymes. Their slender ankles move with the speed of the mind. As Sita achieved all auspiciousness by obeying the commands of Lakṣmana, the *gopis* have become all auspicious because of the incredible beauty of their knees. The thighs of the *gopis* conquer the splendor of the broad trunks of banana trees used to decorate a festival site. The sweetness of their graceful hips is more inspiring than the expert commentaries on difficult passages of the scriptures.

As one cries upon meeting a long lost friend, seeing their charming bellies, which are shaped like *banyan* leaves, brings tears of joy to the eyes. Just as repeated chanting of the holy name makes one fearless, the delightful navels of the *gopis* are endowed with repeated turns. As Kṛṣṇa is inclined to give mercy to the fallen, He is also very attracted to the thin waists of the

gopis. The sweet breasts of the *gopis* defeat the beauty of the clouds in the monsoon season. As the winter season is endowed with long nights, the *gopis* have long graceful arms. Their throats have three attractive lines resembling a conchshell.

As Laksmi-devi's face is wiped by the fingers of Narayana, the *gopis'* faces are tenderly wiped by the fingers of Kṛṣṇa. Their noses surpass the beauty of sesame flowers whose fragrance enhances the elegance of spring. Their captivating lotus eyes resemble the merciful glance of the Lord blessing the world. With their beautiful ears they always drink the sweet nectar of *hari-katha*. The splendid curls in their hair put to shame the effulgence Kuvera's golden city. The hairstyles of the *gopis* are more attractive than the western direction that is skillfully designed by Varuna, its presiding deity.

Srimati Radharani reigns as the best of Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopis*. This beautiful young girl is resplendent with all good qualities such as mercy, sweetness, and vitality. As the crest-jewel among Kṛṣṇa's lovers, She possesses all ornaments, and all types of emotional mellows. Radhika is a golden *ketaki* flower in a garden of *prema*, or a lightning flash in a cloud of sweetness, or a golden line on a testing stone of beauty. Radhika is the light of the moon of bliss. Her slender arms conquer the pride of Cupid. Radharani is the splendorous essence of the ocean of loveliness, and the enchanting smile of those intoxicated by love. She is a mine of the sixty-four arts, and the precious crest-jewel of all good qualities. Radhika's complexion is more golden than a thousand Parvatis.

Radhika is also called Syamā, which means that Her transcendental body is warm in the winter and cool in the hot season. Her breasts are firm, full, slightly raised, and very beautiful. Although existing since time immemorial, Radhika is an ever-fresh young girl. Radharani is the epitome of beauty and the life and soul of Her girlfriends. Though just an innocent young girl, Radharani controls all the goddesses of fortune in the universe. Learned *pandits* call Her Maha-Laksmi, *tantrics* call Her Lila-sakti, and *bhaktas* call Her Hladini-sakti. Radhika is ornamented by Her dear friends who display all good qualities and move as Her reflections.

Among all the young *gopis* there is one group leader named Candravali, who is the crest jewel of dalliance. She bestows the bliss of a million moons. As the material nature is endowed with the qualities of passion and

ignorance, Candravali has all good qualities. Just as the eye has the nature to see forms, similarly, her form is the natural embodiment of beauty. The essence of water is taste (*rasa*), and she is the essence of all *rasa*. Just as flowers distribute their fragrance to everyone, Candravali gives bliss to all. Padma, Saibya, and others serve as her dearest companions. There is another *gopi* group leader named Syama-sakhi, who is very dear to Radhika. Candravali, therefore, though very prominent, is merely another *gopi* group leader amongst the Vraja *gopis*.

All the *brahmanas* living in Nanda Baba's capital embody the principles of *bhagavata dharma*. They are extremely merciful, and always display sense and mind control, tolerance, and renunciation. With great skill they recite *sastras* like the *Bhagavata*, and always study the *Narada Pancaratra* and other Vedic works that corroborate the *Bhagavata*. They alone qualify for Nanda Maharaja's charity, and only they perform the appropriate rituals and ceremonies.

Some of these *brahmanas* worship the *aisvarya* aspect of Kṛṣṇa, and others adore the *madhurya* feature of the Lord. After thorough study of the eighteen branches of knowledge they have become genuinely peaceful and fixed in their own realizations. It is not surprising that they have never been defeated in debate. Though possessing abundant wealth, they always remain humble and exhibit gentle behavior, friendship, kindness, and compassion to one and all. Their transcendental attributes are not by-products of material goodness, passion, or ignorance. What more can be said of their exalted spiritual stature?

Although the oil-sellers, *tambula* salesmen, goldsmiths, pot makers, weavers, and blacksmiths have spiritual forms, they behave like ordinary humans. Commanding the respect of all pious men, they freely distribute their wealth wherever needed. They do not have material bodies, nor do they experience the sufferings of ordinary mortals.

The bees of the monsoon season give joy to all the flowers, yet others do not appreciate them. They resemble Vrndavana's Pulinda women (wanton aborigines) who are also not much appreciated, but because of their devotion they have secured the praises of the demigods.

Rows of huge *goshallas* spread out in all directions in Nanda Maharaja's capital. The four long crystal walls of these *goshallas* are topped with emerald beams, and golden crossbeams that extend beyond the walls. In all corners are ruby cornices firmly attached to the emerald beams. The rooftops have sparkling jeweled surfaces which make them look like jeweled mountain peaks. Just as a wise man is without pride, these *goshallas* are devoid of pillars. As the intelligence of a friendly person is pure and broad, the *goshallas* are very clean and expansive.

Just as a king's palace has numerous doors, the *goshallas* have many splendid doors, and they are dust-free and devoid of breezes. Standing in the yards of the *goshallas* are the best of cows, which are as white as the full moon and have horns as dark as peaks of blue sapphires. The thick bushy tails of these cows resemble the long hair of the ladies of Vrndavana. Upon seeing Kṛṣṇa the cows overwhelm with joy and lift up their tails. This looks as splendid as the effulgence of Bhagavan's *cakra* as it cuts down the demons.

Just as a person bows down to respect the holy waters of a *tirtha*, similarly, the heads of the cows hang down due to the heavy, thick folds of skin under their necks. Their full milk bags resemble the rotund body of Ganesa. Like the mind, these cows are independent and cannot be easily bound. *Sadhakas* gain happiness by engaging in austerities, and the cows feel delighted when they are milked. The cows of Vrndavana are called *kamadhenus* because they fulfill all desires just like *cintamani* gems. As the summer season is ornamented with blooming *kutaja* flowers, the cows are decorated with happy calves.

Literary embellishments increase the sweetness of skillfully written poems. Similarly, the varieties of multi-colored cows beautify the *goshallas*. The *goshallas* are alive with herds of calves jumping about. These adorable calves look like clumps of foam from the milk ocean, spots of moonlight cast on the ground, or like ice boulders from Mt. Kailasa tumbling along the earth. They are the purest of offerings to the demigods.

The huge bulls look like crystal boulders or big waves in the ocean of yogurt. Sleeping peacefully in their pens, they look like ancient sages in meditation. Like liberated souls, they freely wander here and there. Their

huge horns resemble the tusks of the directional elephants. The high humps on their backs resemble the parasol and fans held above a king.

With their red eyes and slow movements they appear stunned like intoxicated persons. When the bulls let out a loud bellow it sounds like the boisterous talk of proud men. The skin folds flapping around their necks resemble the long blankets draped over the backs of renunciates. Due to reflecting the light from the domes of the jeweled palaces, it looks like their horns are multi-colored. When a whirlwind stirs up the jeweled earth to cover the bulls with jeweled dust, they appear distinguished like the personifications of *dharma*. All the cows of Vrndavana are expansions from Goloka.

The capital of Nanda Maharaja is decorated with rows of shops made of jewels, which spread out from the crossroads in neat rows. They are equipped with many bright flags that appear like the victory flags of a triumphant king. As oysters are decorated with pearls, the shops are ornamented with long strands of pearls. These shops, which have wide verandas resembling the thick new leaves appearing in spring, are the dwelling places of the merchants. Some shops smell like the spring season, and others are scented with sandalwood, *aguru*, and *kasturi* just the ointments on a lover's chest. Some shops are heavy with the scent of ripe paddy fields, and others are as effulgent as a mine of jewels.

Surrounding the town are many rows of small forest groves filled with varieties of multi-hued trees, resembling beaches covered with colorful coral. Just as a commander is equipped with many types of elephants and troops, these forests have many types of *kunjas* and bowers. With their many dangling creepers, the forests resemble renunciates engaged in austerities. Just as *rasikas* derive pleasure from the playful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, similarly, these forests please the birds by providing playgrounds for their pastimes.

The *vanadevis* wander hand in hand along the forest paths softened from the sap constantly dripping from the trees. The forest bulls relieve their itching by rubbing their humps against the trees. This action forms *lac* dust which mixes with the honey flowing down the trees to form a “natural *lac*” which looks very beautiful when it sticks on the *lac* covered feet of the forest goddesses. The whole forest is sweetly scented from the juice of the

kakkola berries spilling out of the mouths of the wild rams as they contentedly ruminate. The air is also scented from the aromatic bark of the *devadaru* trees rubbed off by the horns of wild buffaloes.

The sides of the hills are strewn with branches of the *salaki* tree (a favorite food of elephants) broken by the tusks of the wild baby elephants. And the ground is covered with bunches of half-eaten grapes scattered by families of monkeys. The aborigine women who wander through these thick forest groves have dark blue *marica* flowers adorning their ears, and the juice of camphor flowers smeared on their hands. Their mouths are fragrant from chewing *tambula*.

Besides the previously described forest of Vrndavana, there are many other forests such as Kamyavana and Lohavan. The *rasala* trees and other exotic vegetation in these forests create an extraordinary atmosphere. There are many trees such as mango, coconut, *arjuna*, *banyan*, *palasa*, *yellow sal*, *bael*, *jambu*, *asoka*, *bakula*, *naga-campaka*, *golden campaka*, *sirisa*, *lodhra*, *piyala*, *salaki*, *pilu*, *kadamba*, *karavira*, and *tamala*. Vines and shrubs include *nava-mallika*, *kanaka-yutika*, *labanga*, *madhavi*, *sthala-padma*, *mallika*, *kandali*, and *tulasi*.

Lakes full of crystal clear water covered with water lilies, and white, blue, and red lotuses lie scattered throughout these forests. These lakes resound with the singing of herons, ducks, swans, cranes, ospreys, and *cakravakas*.

From the descriptions in the first part of this chapter it is understood that Vraja-mandala, although completely spiritual, is situated within the material world. A person afflicted with jaundice sees a white conch as yellow due to the disease's effect on his vision. Similarly, a person with mundane vision sees Vrndavana as a material place. Out of His independent will the Supreme Lord desired to appear in this world as the baby son of two personalities named Nanda and Yasoda, the eternal embodiments of parental affection. What is impossible for the *lila-sakti* (pastime potency) of Kṛṣṇa who is the origin of all *avatars* and the ocean of all pastimes?

One may object asking why does Kṛṣṇa perform pastimes in the material world? The only reason is to give pleasure to His devotees. In order to reveal the mood of parental affection arising from the activities of babyhood and so on, Kṛṣṇa agreed to become the son of Nanda and Yasoda.

Accepting their care and attention, the omnipotent Lord covered His majesty with an unprecedented sweetness. By exhibiting all the different stages of boyhood such as *kaumara*, *pauganda*, and *kaisora*, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared like an ordinary human being. But throughout these stages Kṛṣṇa remained in His original form as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Although *madhurya rasa* is predominant in Vrndavana, the previous verse has only mentioned parental affection. The reason for this is that all the pastimes with the cows, *gopas*, and *gopis* also go on eternally in the spiritual world. But Kṛṣṇa's babyhood pastimes and the pastimes of killing demons exist only in the Gokula in the material world. Thus one should understand that the sweetness of *bhauma-lila* is not available in the spiritual world.

Kaumara Lila

Chapter Two: The Appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa

Now we will discuss the truth about the transcendental birthplace of Bhagavan and the appearance of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa. Once upon a time, Bhumi, the predominating deity of the earth, felt overburdened by different demons posing as members of the royal order. Feeling aggrieved upon seeing her miserable condition, the lotus-born Brahma appealed to Ksirodakasayi Visnu, the maintainer of the universe, saying, “Please deliver Goddess Bhumi who is feeling greatly distressed by these demoniac kings. Only You can remove this terrible influence from the earth.”

The time for an appearance of the Lord coincided with two internal desires of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. First the Lord desired to descend on earth to increase the fortune of Yasoda and Nanda. Also at that time Kṛṣṇa wanted to relish the sweet mellow of *srngara rasa* (paramour love) while enacting His worldly pastimes. For these two reasons the Lord appeared within the material creation on Bhuloka, (earth planet), along with His parents, friends, and other eternal associates.

Another distinction of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s earthly pastimes is that when the eternally liberated *gopis* such as Srimati Radharani, Candravali, and others appeared, the *Srutis* personified also appeared in the homes of other *gopis*, because they had previously cultivated the desire to serve Sri Kṛṣṇa as Vraja *gopis*. The Dandakaranya sages, upon seeing the *svakiya bhava* (the sweet conjugal relationship) of Lord Ramacandra and Sitadevi, desired to have the same relationship with their Lord Madana Gopala. Upon attaining perfection in their *sadhana* they achieved the fortunate position of appearing as *gopis* in Vrndavana. Yogamaya, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s pastime potency who possesses unlimited abilities, appeared invisibly in Gokula to arrange this, and perform other difficult tasks on behalf of the Lord.

Sri Nanda, Yasoda, and others appeared in Brhadvana (Mahavana) before the Lord. The *gopas*, *gopis*, and other eternally liberated associates

appeared after the Lord. Then those who had attained perfection by *sadhana*, namely the *sruti-caris* and *muni-caris*, took birth in Vrndavana.

Learning of Kṛṣṇa's imminent appearance, the earth personified, feeling like a wife happily greeting her husband after a long separation, immersed in unlimited joy. At the time of Kṛṣṇa's birth the general mass of people tasted the inner bliss that devotees forever relish. Auspicious signs abounded everywhere. As Visnu's conchshell *Pancajanya* opens in a clockwise fashion, similarly, auspicious sacrificial fires glowed in all directions. Pure gentle breezes brought a refreshing coolness like devotees who satisfy and sanctify everyone with their calm, sweet, and affectionate behavior.

The whole atmosphere became as completely purified as the heart of a devotee. The devotees once again found peace and prosperity in worshiping the lotus feet of Lord Hari. Fruits filled the jubilant trees. But the envious demons exhibited various inauspicious signs of degradation such as rapidly aging bodies and symptoms of imminent death. The desire vines of the celestial denizens seemed to be hanging in the air as if eager to produce fruits. At that time all the directions became as pure and joyful as the mind of a devotee who has received the mercy of Lord Hari. Just as gems, *mantras*, or medicines can remove a poisonous disease from the body of a man, the advent of the Lord relieved the world from the contamination of material existence and the sinful effect of the demons. Happiness gradually replaced the distress in everyone's hearts.

The bodies of all creatures manifested extraordinary beauty and youthful vitality. Men felt extremely joyful and displayed virtuous qualities. Throughout the world people behaved cordially and interacted amicably. Happiness twinkled in everyone's eye. At the end of Dvapara-yuga, which completely destroys faults and doubts, an auspicious, favorable, obstacle-free time appeared on the eighth day of the waning moon in Bhadra month. Just at that sweet moment the Rohini Nakshatra, along with the good qualities of the moon and an auspicious conjunction of stars called Ayusman, appeared in the sky to give shelter to gentle persons.

As the living entity comes out from the womb of his mother, Yogesvara Sri Kṛṣṇa, the personification of complete bliss, appeared amidst great festivities. As the moon appears in the lap of the eastern direction, which is

like a beautiful bride, Kṛṣṇa manifested the wonderful pastime of His appearance out of His love and compassion for the conditioned souls.

Due to austerities performed in previous lives, Vasudeva and Devaki received the opportunity to momentarily relish parental affection for Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa when He appeared before them in His form as Vasudeva. Thereafter in fear of Kamsa, Vasudeva brought Vasudeva Kṛṣṇa to Gokula. There the Supreme Lord appeared as Govinda before Nanda and Yasoda, His eternal parents who have been smothering Him with the sweetest form of parental love since time immemorial. The four symbols of Viṣṇu (*sankha, cakra, gada, padma*) adorned His hands and feet. The flute, flower garland, and *kaustubha mani*, although present within Him, had not yet manifested.

In fear of cruel Kamsa, Vasudeva decided to transfer all his wives except Devaki to Gokula. He sent Rohini to the house of Vrajaraja Nanda. By the sweet will of the Lord, Yogamaya arranged for the seventh child of Devaki (Balarama) to enter the womb of Rohini. As a result, Balarama appeared in the home of Vrajaraja Nanda before the birth of Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Hari, who is bliss personified, appeared in the home of Nanda Maharaja, the king of Vṛndavana for three reasons: to engage the self satisfied sages in devotional service, to please the devotees by performing sweet transcendental pastimes, and to relieve the earth's burden caused by the demons. At the time of His majestic birth Kṛṣṇa employed His inconceivable powers to appear in a body of eternity, bliss and knowledge. Everyone in the maternity room swelled with joy upon seeing the Lord's exquisite transcendental form that looked like a creeper of beauty.

Mother Yasoda resembled a lake of spiritual ecstasy in which a brilliant blue lotus of personified bliss had appeared. Neither the wind nor the bees relished the fragrance of that blue lotus. That unborn lotus was never touched by the waves of the modes of nature. Even Lord Brahma could not see it, what to speak of ordinary men.

After Yasoda and her family members fell asleep in the maternity room, Hari cried beautifully like a newborn baby. His crying sounded like the *maha-vakya omkara* announcing the auspicious arrival of His pastimes. *Omkara* is a transcendental vibration that had previously emanated from the

mouth of Lord Brahma. When the ladies of Vrndavana heard the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa's crying, they woke up and ran to see the Lord. With the mellow of their matchless overflowing affection they anointed His body.

The natural fragrance of Kṛṣṇa's body smelled just like musk. After the ladies bathed Kṛṣṇa in sweet ambrosia, He looked cleansed and beautiful. Then they smeared His body with fragrant sandalwood pulp. The presiding deity of the house sent a *campaka* flower resembling the flame of a lamp into the maternity room to worship that ornament of the three worlds. With the strength of His little arms, delicate as the tender leaves of a tree, Kṛṣṇa made all the lamps in the maternity room look like a garland of lotus flower buds.

The ladies of Vrndavana saw baby Kṛṣṇa like a blossoming flower made of the best of blue sapphires, or like a newly unfurled leaf of a *tamala* tree. Kṛṣṇa looked like a fresh rain cloud decorated with the musk *tilaka* of the goddess of fortune of the three worlds. The ointment of the greatest auspiciousness lined His eyes. His presence filled the maternity room with good fortune. Although a mere baby, Kṛṣṇa had a head full of curly hair. To hide the unique signs on His hands (goat, fish, conch etc.) the Lord folded His delicate petal-like fingers into His lotus palm. At that time Kṛṣṇa laid on His back with His eyes closed.

Mother Yasoda awoke amidst the joyous chattering of the elderly *gopis*. Leaning over the bed she admired her gorgeous son. But upon noticing her own reflection on Kṛṣṇa's body, she imagined it another woman. Thinking that a witch had assumed her form to kidnap Kṛṣṇa, Yasoda became bewildered and yelled, "Get out of here! You go away!" Spontaneously she cried out to Nrsimhadeva to protect her precious son. Beholding Kṛṣṇa's tender face, Yasoda showered tears of affection that looked like an offering of a pearl necklace.

Yasoda saw Kṛṣṇa's body as a mound of dark blue musk, softer than the butter churned from the milk ocean. Overflowing with nectar, His charming body appeared like the foam of milk, but being dark blue in color it seemed the foam was full of musk juice. Admiring the supremely delicate form of her son, Yasoda worried about His safety and feared the touch of her body might hurt His tender body.

As she leaned over the bed Yasoda bathed Kṛṣṇa with the milk dripping from her breasts. The elderly *gopis* instructed Yasoda how to caress the baby in her lap, and affectionately push the nipple of her breast into Kṛṣṇa's mouth to feed Him. Due to Yasoda's intense love, personified bliss flowed from her breasts as steady streams of milk. When milk sometimes spilled out of Kṛṣṇa's *bimba* fruit red lips onto His cheeks, Mother Yasoda would wipe His face with the edge of her cloth. After feeding her son, Yasoda gazed affectionately at Him in wonder.

She saw her child's body as made of dazzling blue sapphires. His mouth resembled a red *bimba* fruit and His hands and feet looked like exquisite rubies. Kṛṣṇa's nails shone like precious gems. In this way, Yasoda thought her child was completely made of jewels. Then she perceived that His naturally reddish lips looked like *bandhuka* flowers, His hands and feet resembled *java* flowers, His nails looked like *mallika* flowers. Yasoda then thought, "Kṛṣṇa's whole body seems to be made of blue lotus flowers. He does not appear to be mine." After thus deliberating within herself Yasoda became stunned in amazement.

The beautiful, soft curly hairs on the right side of Kṛṣṇa's chest resembled the tender stems of a lotus. Seeing the mark of Srivatsa on His chest, Yasoda thought it was breast milk that had previously spilled out of His mouth. She tried unsuccessfully to remove these 'milk stains' with the edge of her cloth. Struck with wonder, Yasoda thought this must be the sign of a great personality. Observing the sign of Lakṣmi (a small golden line) on the left side of Kṛṣṇa's chest, Yasoda thought a small yellow bird had made a nest amidst the leaves of a *tamala* tree. Could this be a streak of lightning resting on a rain cloud, or could it be the golden streaks marking a black gold-testing stone? Kṛṣṇa's delicate, leaf-like hands and feet, glowing pink like the rising sun, looked like clusters of lotus flowers floating in the Yamuna.

Sometimes Yasoda saw the curly, dark blue locks of baby Kṛṣṇa as a swarm of bumblebees surrounding His face. Intoxicated from drinking too much honey nectar, the bees just hovered in the sky. His thick, beautiful blue hair appeared like the dark night. The two lotus eyes of Kṛṣṇa looked like a pair of blue lotus buds. His cheeks resembled two huge bubbles floating in a

lake of liquefied blue sapphires. Kṛṣṇa's attractive ears looked like a pair of fresh unfurled leaves growing on a blue creeper.

The tip of Kṛṣṇa's dark nose appeared like the sprout of a tree, and His nostrils looked like bubbles in the Yamuna River, the daughter of the sun-god. His lips resembled a pair of red *java* flower buds. Kṛṣṇa's chin rivaled a pair of ripe, red *jambu* fruits. Seeing the extraordinary beauty of her son fulfilled the purpose of her eyes and submerged Yasoda in an ocean of bliss.

The elderly Vrajavasi ladies addressed Vrajaraja Nanda, "O most fortunate one, you fathered a son!" Previously Nanda Maharaja had felt deeply aggrieved over his long-standing inability to obtain a son. His heart was like a small lake that had completely dried up during a long hot summer. But when Nanda Maharaja heard of his son's birth he felt as if the dry lake of his heart had been blessed with a sudden downpour of nectar. The gentle sound of Kṛṣṇa's voice removed all his grief and lamentation. Now he bathed in the rains of bliss, swam in the ocean of nectar, and felt embraced by the joyful stream of the celestial Ganges.

Eager to see his son, Nanda's body thrilled with astonishment and waves of ecstasy as he stood outside the maternity room. Because he had accumulated heaps of pious activities, it appeared that the King of Vṛndavana was now shaking hands with the personification of pious deeds. Anxiously standing in the background, Yogamaya induced Nanda Maharaja to enter the maternity room. He rushed in to see his son, the personified seed of condensed bliss. It seemed that all the auspiciousness of the three worlds now resided within Kṛṣṇa, the original cause of everything. Nanda saw his son as a perfectly charming person. The *kajala* around Kṛṣṇa's eyes looked like lines on a black creeper of beauty. As the very embodiment of Nanda's good fortune, Sri Kṛṣṇa bloomed like a beautiful flower in a garden of desire trees.

The *aparajita* flower is compared to the body of the Queen of Vṛndavana. Her son is like the representative of the *Upanisads* that are compared to the fruit of the desire creepers. By seeing his glorious son Nanda felt that he had attained happiness, perfection, and the fulfillment of all his desires. Meeting that embodiment of bliss overwhelmed Nanda with immeasurable satisfaction. He stood motionless, stunned; his hair stood erect and tears flowed from his eyes. He appeared like a person carved in stone or a figure

drawn in a painting. For some time Nanda Maharaja remained in this semi-conscious state like a sleeping man about to awaken.

Upananda, Sunanda, and other relatives felt extremely joyful while observing the best of *brahmanas* perform the rites of purification for Kṛṣṇa's birth. To insure his son's welfare Nanda Maharaja donated newborn calves to each and every *brahmana*, thus turning their homes into abodes of *surabhi* cows. These cows had gold and silver plated horns and hooves, and jeweled necklaces adorning their necks. In addition, Vrajapati Nanda filled the courtyards of their homes with hills of gold, jewels, and sesame seeds. While Nanda distributed charity, the *kamadhenus*, touch-stones, and desire-trees lost their power to produce valuable items. Even the jewel-producing oceans lost their stock of jewels, and the goddess of fortune, the abode of lotuses, had but one lotus in her hand. The auspicious news of Kṛṣṇa's wonderful appearance spread in all directions by word of mouth. Delight danced in the hearts of Nanda, his brothers Upananda and Sunanda, and all the other *gopas*.

The *gopas* brought many varieties of delicious dairy products such as milk, yogurt, butter, wet cheese, and hard cheese in jewel-studded pots. The pots were tied to the ends of bamboo poles with jute straps and carried on their shoulders. Bedecked with many precious jeweled ornaments, the *gopas* appeared very handsome. They dressed in beautiful yellow cloth defeating the brilliance of lightning, and held staffs topped with gold and jewels in their lotus hands. As a great ocean spreads its waves in all directions, the birth of Kṛṣṇa filled the Vrajavasis with unbounded bliss. The *gopas* and *gopis* enjoyed a grand festival by happily eating and by splashing each other's bodies with a mixture of yogurt, butter, milk, and condensed milk.

The society girls visiting Nanda Maharaja's house experienced more happiness than they had ever felt since their birth. Their minds saturated with joy and satisfaction. Hearing the delightful description of Kṛṣṇa's birth carried away the chariots of their minds and made them abandon all other duties. They became possessed with the desire to see Kṛṣṇa.

Sparkling rubies hung from the necklaces adorning the society girls. Their diamond-studded armlets shone more beautifully than drops of crystal clear water. Their jewel inlaid golden bangles boasted unparalleled elegance. For this unique festival they took out some highly ornamental waist-belts from

their jewel boxes and tied them around their hips. The sweet jingling of the waist-bells resting on their broad hips enhanced the beauty of these society girls. They attracted the minds of everyone with their bulky golden anklets, loosened hair braids, and graceful gait, which resembled the smooth gliding of swans. Their minds entered a state of enchantment as they gazed upon the captivating beauty of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body. To worship Kṛṣṇa they brought golden trays full of auspicious articles such as fruits, flowers, yogurt, *durva* grass, uncooked rice, and jewel bedecked lamps. They covered the offering plates with splendid yellow silk cloth and held them in their soft lotus hands. Their jeweled ankle-bells vibrated pleasantly as they walked.

Beholding the astounding beauty of the delicate baby, the society girls considered the purpose of their eyes fulfilled. They perceived Kṛṣṇa's perfect birth to be like the appearance of the leaves of an important herbal medicine. Kṛṣṇa resembled a blue lotus floating in the lake of His parent's affection. After bestowing their blessings for Kṛṣṇa's prosperity, they worshiped Kṛṣṇa with fresh flowers and a constant shower of loving glances. With great enthusiasm the society girls glorified Vrajesvari Yasoda since she had attained the essence of all good fortune by having Kṛṣṇa as her son.

Leaving the maternity room, the society girls entered the assembly hall of Nanda Maharaja's palace. Their faces looked exceedingly beautiful as they sung melodious songs, which resembled the soft sweet humming of bees moving amidst a cluster of lotus flowers. All the guests bathed in a nectar shower produced by these soothing sounds. Overwhelmed with love, they filled their lotus palms with fragrant oil, turmeric paste, and fresh butter and started smearing each other's faces and bodies. They looked very attractive with their smiling faces and glittering white teeth.

Their red lips seemed more beautiful than red *bandhuka* flowers. This incredible display of elegance smashed the pride of the goddess of fortune of the three worlds. Carried away with joy over Kṛṣṇa's birth, they fearlessly threw cheese balls, butter, and yogurt at each other. One could mistake the white balls of cheese for hailstones, solidified moonlight, or white mud from the floor of the milk ocean. Then they showered each other with buttermilk, aromatic oils, and water mixed with turmeric.

Cymbals, *damru* drums, *bherries*, and big drums vibrated auspicious sounds in specific melodies. A celestial concert of precise poetical meters, proper rhythms, and metrical compositions suddenly manifested there. The musical ensemble inspired the society girls to sing and dance in mirth and merriment. Though not good singers, by the will of the Lord they sang with great virtuoso. Their wonderful songs filled Nanda Maharaja's heart with joy. The combined vibrations of *brahmanas*' chanting Vedic hymns, the recitation of *Puranic* lore, and the panegyrist's prayers transformed the ethers into *sabda brahman*.

The joy of Kṛṣṇa's birth celebration taxed the drains of Nanda's capital city as they swelled to the brim with milk, yogurt, and other auspicious liquids. Soon rivers of this nectar flooded the streets of the town and permeated the entire atmosphere with a sweet fragrance. Disguising themselves as birds, the demigods descended to Vrajapura to happily drink the flood of nectar. The Vrajavasis decorated their cows with gold and jeweled ornaments. Then in great excitement they smeared them with oil, fresh butter, and turmeric paste. Beholding Kṛṣṇa in their hearts, these fortunate cows looked like the essence of the earth's auspiciousness. The whole world resounded with their jubilant bellowing. Absorbed in the ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa's birth, they forgot about eating and drinking.

The festival drowned the *gopis* in an ocean of joy. After offering oil, vermilion, garlands, and utensils in charity to all the assembled *gopis*, Rohini, the wife of Vasudeva, asked them to bless Kṛṣṇa. Upon completion of the sacrifice, Upananda and the other relatives felt constant happiness while taking their baths. Keeping the King of Vṛndavana in the front, Nanda's relatives offered opulent cloth, jeweled ornaments, *tambula*, garlands, and sandalwood pulp to the guests. Then they humbly requested all in attendance to bless that wonderfully auspicious boy who had just appeared in Vṛndavana.

Chapter Three: The Killing of Putana

The Supreme Brahman, taking the form of a human being, descended on earth and assumed the mood of a village boy. Although He appeared like an ordinary human to the common people, Sri Kṛṣṇa, who is famous as the beautiful form of supreme transcendence, has a completely pure spiritual body. Manifesting along with His divine consort, He fully satisfied the minds of everyone.

Once, Vrajaraja Nanda, having accepted the customs of ordinary people, followed the proper etiquette to protect his city, and went to Mathura with other senior men to pay taxes to King Kamsa for their yearly milk production. The Yadus and their faithful servants accompanied him.

In Mathura, King Kamsa had previously tried to kill the eighth child of Devaki, who appeared as the personification of Yogamaya. At that time Yogamaya severely rebuked Kamsa, who was known as Kalanemi in his previous life, saying, “You fool! What benefit will you get by killing me? The one who will kill you has already taken birth somewhere else.” Remembering his past enmity toward Lord Visnu, that cruel and wicked Kamsa then tactfully sent Putana *raksasi* to Vrndavana to kill baby Kṛṣṇa. She was as foreboding as an evil planet. Capable of assuming any form, Putana came to Nanda’s capital disguised as the most beautiful woman in the three worlds. The villagers became attracted and bewildered by seeing such an exceptionally charming woman. In this way, Putana astonished the minds of everyone with her superbly enchanting form.

Seeing the extraordinary elegance of Putana, the Vrajavasis openly mocked the famous society girls of heaven, saying, “O Urvasi! You are the best of the heavenly damsels, but in the presence of Putana you are no more than a beggar! O Alambuse! There is no use maintaining the high bamboos of your pride any longer, for it has now been crushed. O Rambhe! Very soon you will become the consort of a frog. O Ghitachi! Your fame, which can be compared to a line of melted butter, is now as valuable as a crematorium covered by water. O Menake! All my followers now laugh heartily at you. O Prambolche! A rushing current has now washed away the treasure of your beauty. O Citralekhe! Your captivating form appears now like lines in a painting. O Tilottame! Your glorious fame has dwindled to nil.”

Everyone wondered about the identity of Putana. The Vrajavasis thought, “Is this lady the presiding demigoddess of Vrndavana? Is she the goddess of fortune of the three worlds? Is she a creeper of lightning appearing without a cloud? Is she a friend of the *kumuda* flowers blossoming under the moon?”

When Putana entered Yasoda’s home, the Vrajavasis concluded that the goddess of the three worlds had favored that great soul, the King of Vrndavana, by personally coming to render all kinds of service. Like a thief executing his nefarious plan, that shameless woman Putana, her heart full of cruelty and ignorance, courageously entered the house. Putana saw baby Kṛṣṇa as a spark of a powerful fire capable of burning the sum total of all misfortune to ashes. That boy shone like the transcendental flame of a lamp competent of subduing all enemies produced by the dense darkness of night. He was just like another Agastya Rsi who could easily swallow the deadly ocean of poison represented by material existence. Baby Kṛṣṇa lay on a bed as white as the rays of the full moon, or the foam produced from churning the ocean of milk. The baby looked like a great emerald sprouting from a field of powdered camphor.

Putana played the part of the sweet deceiver who outwardly speaks pleasing words, but harbors cruelty within his vicious heart. She exactly resembled a well covered with grass in order to trap a wild elephant. Her attractive form rivaled the jeweled sheath of a deadly sword. Although assuming the form of a desire creeper, Putana posed as a poisonous plant.

Displaying motherly affection, Putana held the baby in her lap. Yasoda and Rohini wondered, “Is this woman Bhagavati Gauri? Or is she the presiding deity of the material elements? Is she the consort of Indra, the queen of Varuna, or the consort of Agnideva? Has she appeared here to display affection toward my son?” Thinking thus, they did not prevent Putana from offering her breast milk to the baby.

At that time Vrajesvari Yasoda thought, “Am I the mother or is this woman the mother of my child?” Fearlessly, Putana picked up baby Kṛṣṇa and cuddled Him in her lap. The compassionate Lord, who is absolute knowledge personified, acted unaware of the situation. Accepting Putana as His mother, Kṛṣṇa immediately climbed up on her lap. Yasoda and Rohini watched attentively as Putana expressed motherly affection toward Kṛṣṇa

by pressing her poison covered nipple into His mouth. His soft, copper-colored lips resembled drinking cups made of the petals of a cluster of *bandhuka* flowers. Expert at performing pastimes, Kṛṣṇa skillfully sucked out both Putana's milk and her very life, which left her helpless and stupefied. Feeling intense pain, Putana shrieked, "Please leave me, leave me!" as she forcefully tried to throw the baby off her breast.

But Kṛṣṇa held tightly with both hands and sucked her breast milk with the cup of His soft lips. Curiously, Kṛṣṇa derived no satisfaction from drinking that milk. Then Putana assumed her *raksasi* form as a horrible demon. After accepting her poison milk, Kṛṣṇa threw Putana's huge and hideous body out of town. If the body had fallen in the city it could have killed many residents.

To everyone's amazement Kṛṣṇa sat peacefully in Putana's lap. The Vrajavasis froze in fright upon seeing the gigantic body of that witch. Her visit resembled the tax collector who intimidates the people when collecting money. As Vibhisana manifested his glories in the white land of Lanka, similarly, Putana revealed a terrible body in Vṛndavana. As clouds hover above mountaintops, the milk filled breasts of that demon looked like big clouds towering above her mountainous body.

As Bali Maharaja resides in Patala, the cavernous mouth of Putana challenged the depth of Patalaloka. Her nostrils resembled the dangerous ravine of a mountain, her powerful set of teeth looked like a plowshare, and her arms resembled two palm trees. As soldiers precede the commander, her extended tongue formed a royal road leading to the dreadful kingdom of her body. Putana's abdomen appeared like a large lake containing varieties of aquatics. In the jungle the *banyan* and *baheera* trees grow very tall, similarly, her eyes looked like *tala* trees.

The ugly body of Putana extended for twelve miles. When the body of Putana fell to the ground, it smashed all the mango trees in King Kamsa's fruit orchard. The affection that Putana had shown toward Kṛṣṇa left Yasodarani in a state of bewilderment. Not seeing her son, Yasoda cried like a cow lamenting over the death of her calf, and then fainted while sighing, "Alas! How painful, what happened to my son? Where is He?" With tender care the elderly *gopis* tried to revive Yasoda.

Although still stunned, Yasoda spoke, “Alas, how painful! Seeing that my son is more beautiful than a blue lotus, the heavenly damsels kidnapped Him in order to decorate their ears. Considering my son to be a priceless blue sapphire, the Nagapatnis took Him to adorn their foreheads. Thinking Him to be a fragrant flower of the *tamala* tree, the Gandharvas abducted Him to decorate their braids with Him. Seeing my son as the personification of perfection (*siddhi*), have the *yoginis* snatched Him to help achieve some *siddhis*? Mistaking my son for the moon has Siva put Him in his matted locks? Are the activities of this wicked lady the results of my bad *karma*, or is it just a freak play of destiny? Considering me unworthy, has my son gone to another mother?”

While thus lamenting, Yasoda staggered a few steps and fell senseless. But the moment she heard that her son had returned, Vrajesvari Yasoda regained her consciousness. Upon waking, she said, “Please tell me, has someone kidnapped my son? Where can I find him?” As she stumbled forward, Yasoda’s hair came undone and her dress got covered with dirt. In such a distressed condition, she resembled a *laval*i creeper blown about by a strong wind. Although the Vraja *gopis* tried to restrain her, Yasoda continued to wail and strike her breasts. She appeared like compassion personified as she passed through the town gate.

Meanwhile the *gopas* frantically ran in all directions crying, “Has a mountain peak, without being driven by a high wind, suddenly crashed down in Vrndavana? Is it the dead womb of the earth? Is it some melted flesh fallen from the sky? Is it a heap of bones collected from the ten directions? Is it the body of a demon?”

Kṛṣṇa’s relatives saw all the townspeople running fearfully to the east. Out of compassion for His family and friends, Kṛṣṇa crawled up on Putana’s chest so that they could see Him playing there freely. Thinking thus, Kṛṣṇa arranged for Putana to fall down outside of town. The *gopas* saw that child, who ever relishes blissful pastimes, as a small cloud sitting on a beautiful mountain peak. Upon seeing Kṛṣṇa, the *gopas* cried out, “O look! That woman came to kill the son of Nanda, but she died as a result of her grave offense. O how fortunate we are!” Then the *gopas* climbed up on Putana’s body that seemed like the base of a mountain. Beholding that gentle yet

fearless, beautiful boy with a sweet smile, the cowherd men picked Him up and handed Him from one to another.

Then the *gopis* told Yasoda, “O pious one, here is your son, please embrace Him.” Thinking their words like those heard in a dream, Yasoda said, “Are you tricking me?” Like a person suffering under the spell of an evil planet, Yasoda could not believe them. However, she regained conviction when Kṛṣṇa was placed in her lap. Vrajesvari Yasoda appeared like a woman awaking from a deep sleep of lamentation, or a dead body coming back to life, or an unconscious person returning to his senses.

Yasoda swelled with joy upon seeing her son’s face. Thereafter, Yasoda and Rohini, along with the other elderly *gopis*, waved about the switch of a cow, bathed the beautiful child with cow’s urine, and performed other purifying acts to create auspiciousness. To further protect the child they chanted the holy names of the Lord.

Meanwhile, the Vrajavasis chopped up the gigantic body of Putana, took it away, and burned it. From a distance that burning body, spewing forth deep black smoke and many sparks, looked like a monsoon cloud illuminated by streaks of lightning. Because Kṛṣṇa had touched Putana the smoke rising from her burning body filled every planet up to Vaikuntha with a sweet aroma. Everyone enjoyed that fragrance which smelled like incense of *aguru* and sandalwood. The rain falling through that fragrant smoke saturated the earth with a sweet smell.

Vrajaraja Nanda returned from Mathura amidst all this commotion. Observing the smoke and feeling apprehensive, the associates of Nanda said, “O King of Vṛndavana, is this a blue veil blowing in the wind and reaching up to touch the feet of a celestial lady? Is it the tips of tall grasses, or the rays emanating from the jewels on the hoods of the huge serpents from Rasatala trying to pierce the coverings of the universe? Is it the running back and forth of the elephants that hold up the four directions? Is it clouds falling on the ground and again rising up to pollute the entire sky? Is it the mood of the goddess earth during her monthly contamination period ascending to heaven? Or has a dense cloud of darkness suddenly spread throughout the universe?”

Moving closer to Putana, the elderly *gopas* wondered, “Where has all this aromatic smoke suddenly come from? Has the fragrance of the earth, expressing its desire to conquer the sky, taken the form of smoke to spread throughout the world?”

Thus, the *gopas* argued amongst themselves about the amazing event. Feeling disturbed, Vrajaraja Nanda said, “What happened? What is wrong?” Within minutes the Vrajavasis assembled before Nanda Maharaja and told him about Putana’s demoniac deeds. Then to purify His son, Nanda Baba attentively observed all the proper Vedic rites, which included bathing Him with cow’s urine and other auspicious substances. Gazing at his beloved child, Nanda relished unlimited paternal affection.

After the joyous sounds subsided, Vrajaraja Nanda picked up his son and affectionately smelled His head. He felt as if the seeds of bliss had sprouted within his heart. Overwhelmed with unlimited pleasure, his mind melted with ecstatic feelings and his eyes streamed tears of happiness.

Who can describe the mercy of the Lord? Even though Putana *raksasi* came disguised as a mother to kill Kṛṣṇa with her poisonous breast milk, the compassionate Lord gave her the position of a mother in the spiritual world.

Chapter Four: The Killing of Sakatasura and Trnavarta

At the age of three months Kṛṣṇa rolled over and crawled out of the house. To commemorate this event Yasoda observed a special ceremony. The elderly *gopis*, looking like creepers of maternal affection, felt intoxicated with bliss by taking part in this function. It seems this pleasure came as a result of their previous piety. Since the *gopis*' hearts overflowed with compassion, they always observed auspicious rituals for the satisfaction and protection of Kṛṣṇa.

All the Vrajavasis anxiously rushed to see Kṛṣṇa. The arrival of the splendidly dressed elderly *gopis* greatly enhanced the joyous atmosphere of the festival. Yasoda and other *gopis* smeared oil on Kṛṣṇa's body to celebrate the auspicious occasion of His leaving home for the first time to crawl about on His hands and knees. *Mrdangas* played melodiously while Yasoda bathed her son and honored the guests. Kṛṣṇa-kumara looked extremely beautiful after His auspicious bath and the application of *kajala* to His lotus eyes.

Vrajesvari Yasoda pleased all her relatives by performing the traditional family rituals. Vrajaraja Nanda also relished boundless happiness during the festival. As an expert in domestic affairs, Rohini remembered her husband and distributed charity to all the guests. Afterwards, Yasoda put Kṛṣṇa to rest on a soft mattress, which was whiter than powdered camphor, in an ornately decorated cradle, which she placed under a handcart.

Mother Yasoda worshiped the guests while Kṛṣṇa rested peacefully. Melodious music from rumbling *mrdangas*, *bherries*, *dundubhis* and other instruments filled the air. The waves of music produced by the talented musicians sweetened all directions. Satisfied *brahmanas* recited Vedic hymns to bless the child. Yasodanandana, whose beauty defeats beauty personified, started crying due to hunger and a desire to drink Yasoda's breast milk. But Vrajesvari could not hear Him due to the loud music and singing.

At this time, Kṛṣṇa decided to kill Sakatasura, a demon who was hiding in the cart under which He lay. Opening His joyful eyes, Kṛṣṇa simultaneously

destroyed the cart and killed the demon by playfully kicking His feet. Without any effort Kṛṣṇa vanquished that demon with His tender feet, which were unlimitedly beautiful and softer than the petals of a lotus flower. These were not the thunderbolt nails He used to kill Hiranyakasipu; nor were they the legs He extended throughout the universe in His Vamana incarnation. The gentle tinkling of Kṛṣṇa's ankle-bells increased the splendor of His delicate little legs.

Although the cart stood considerably higher than the child, Kṛṣṇa easily kicked the wheel of the cart with His feet. The brass pots on the cart made a tremendously loud sound as they tumbled over the ground. From the force of Kṛṣṇa's kick the wheels split from the axle, the hubs and spokes fell apart, and the handcart collapsed. Everyone's hearts stopped when they heard the shattering sound of Sakatasura falling down dead. Thinking that Kṛṣṇa may have been hurt, the Vrajavasis filled with anguish. Their hearts overwhelmed in fear, they anxiously rushed to the spot.

With great anxiety they met Kṛṣṇa and said, "Alas! Is this the beginning of some imminent danger? This cart represented auspiciousness since it remained in their house for so long without moving. How did this cart suddenly become inauspicious? This perfect boy is the sum total of all pious activities. Although many heavy brass pots crashed down, none of them touched the tender limbs of Kṛṣṇa whose glossy body is smeared with musk. O Lord of Vṛndavana, Nanda Maharaja! In any assembly you are the natural leader, and along with your wife Yasoda you are the embodiments of all fortune. Our words fail to describe the extent of your wonderful glories." Thus the Vrajavasis praised the King of Vṛndavana.

The cowherd boys met their parents and described the heroic deeds of Kṛṣṇa in broken language. They said, "It is not His fault. He felt hungry and started crying loudly for some milk. When He did not get any, then why blame Him if He did something wrong? You should not scold Him. Unless driven by the wind how can a lotus bud move, similarly, the cart broke and fell to the ground because Kṛṣṇa kicked it with His legs while crying." Assuming there must be some unknown cause, the elderly persons did not believe the statements of the children.

Fearing that the death of Sakatasura must have brought some danger to her son, Yasodarani fell down on the ground. Rohini and the *gopis*

affectionately picked up Yasoda, and pacified her with the good news about Kṛṣṇa's safety. By their comforting words Yasoda regained her senses and wiped away her tears.

Mother Yasoda said, "Alas! My three-month old baby, whose body is softer than butter, has suffered so much. Suddenly this cart broke and fell upon my son. Since my heart did not stop upon hearing about this, it must be harder than a thunderbolt. Shame on my motherly love! Alas! I am His mother in name only."

"The earth shook from the crashing of the cart and the people became speechless. When that cart fell down around my child He cried in fear, but did not get hurt. I guess it must be the result of my misfortune. Otherwise, why are such evil events occurring like Putana's visit and the breaking of the cart? Therefore the auspicious King of Vṛndavana must arrange to prevent any further calamities coming to my child. From this incident I can only guess what further misfortune awaits me."

Thus lamenting and feeling apprehensive, Mother Yasoda ran quickly to her son. She saw His attractive face conquering the effulgent beauty of the moon with its ever-increasing charm. Yasoda drowned in an ocean of sweetness when she placed Kṛṣṇa on her lap. Surcharged with feelings of bliss, Yasoda's mind became pacified and free from worry.

Nanda and Yasoda observed an auspicious religious ritual on behalf of Kṛṣṇa-kumara, whose radiant body looked gorgeous. Although Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Brahman, He appeared in Vṛndavana as a boy with curly dark blue hair and a tender transcendental form. As Yasoda fondly fed Kṛṣṇa the milk dripping from her breasts, He gradually fell asleep. Then she tucked Kṛṣṇa back in His bed under the cart just as before. Rohini, the wife of Vasudeva, whose lustrous beauty surpasses all the women of heaven, engaged the *brahmanas* in chanting auspicious *mantras* to counteract the evil effects caused by Sakatasura.

Trnavarta Demon Vanquished

One blissful day during Kṛṣṇa's first year, Yasoda lifted up her resplendent, jewel-like son while passing through the main chamber of the palace. She lovingly fondled and caressed Him. With His perfect intelligence Kṛṣṇa immediately perceived some danger. Employing His Yogamaya potency,

Kṛṣṇa decided to reveal an ecstatic childhood pastime to show compassion to those rotting in the material world.

Thinking thus, Kṛṣṇa made His body so heavy that He forced His mother to set Him down. Mother Yasoda, who is worshipable by all the three worlds, suddenly felt very tired from carrying her heavy son. As a creeper hangs down from the weight of ripened fruits, similarly, mother Yasoda bent over from the heavy weight of her maternal affection. Afraid of dropping her beloved son, Yasoda carefully sat Kṛṣṇa down.

By the sweet will of the Lord, Yogamaya influenced Yasoda's mind. Without the slightest worry, She left Kṛṣṇa alone outside the house and went inside to perform other domestic duties. Mother Yasoda had no idea that she had left Kṛṣṇa in a dangerous position. Yasoda's bewilderment had no other apparent cause than the all-powerful manifestation of her son's majesty. Realizing her mistake upon entering the house, Yasoda quickly ran back to get Kṛṣṇa.

Meanwhile a demon named Trnavarta descended upon Vṛndavana. Taking the form of a huge cyclone, he terrorized all the people and animals. The whirlwind created by the demon seemed like an exhalation of hot breath from the wives of thousands of snakes burning in separation from their husbands. It appeared as if the earth transformed into a blacksmith's bellows emitting a loud sound in all directions. Or was it the ears of the elephants controlling the four directions, which look like large flat trays used for winnowing grain, flapping back and forth causing the whole sky to fall down?

The body of Trnavarta, full of high winds and a dense covering of dust, resembled the body of a diseased man infected with ignorance and passion due to fever and cough. Although a crooked person may externally show some sweetness, he will never let anyone enter his bitter heart. Just as excessive wine drinking covers the intelligence and makes one go crazy, Trnavarta covered all directions with dense darkness. As a battlefield fills with darkness due to the movement of masses of elephants, similarly, Trnavarta's whirlwind body enveloped Vṛndavana in a dense cloud of darkness.

Trnavarta, an extremely powerful demon sent by Kamsa, disturbed the natural balance of the material world made of five gross elements. He converted the three worlds into one element, namely wind. Although the dust particles within that whirlwind danced joyfully, the Vrajavasis felt greatly distressed. At its zenith the whirlwind touched the heavens, and it was so dense that it blinded everyone on earth. It seemed like the cloud of smoke created by the lord of the snakes during the dissolution of the universe.

Intent on killing Kṛṣṇa, Trnavarta quickly attacked with his powerful winds. He dropped a deadly shower of dust, grass, and broken pots on the people of Vrndavana. Mother Yasoda worried about her son's safety. She did not realize that her darling son, whose soft hands and feet possess the beauty, fragrance, and coolness of a lotus flower, could easily kill the biggest giants or the immortal demigods in heaven.

Suddenly Trnavarta kidnapped that tender baby who would soon cause his death. But Kṛṣṇa, who is worshiped by Brahma, Siva, and all the demigods, did not feel the slightest pain or distress. The whirlwind sent the sweet fragrance of Kṛṣṇa's body into the celestial abodes. Kṛṣṇa happily assumed a powerful feature while contemplating how to kill the demon. Trnavarta felt that he was carrying a fire bound in a cloth, a deadly poison within his throat, or death personified.

To satisfy the celestial damsels desirous of His *darsana*, Kṛṣṇa rode the whirlwind into the heavens. He looked like a man running up a flight of stairs as He continually rose upward atop Trnavarta. When Kṛṣṇa struck the demon with His hand, which smelled like musk and looked as splendid as the stem of a lotus, the demon's life air slowly left his body. Then with a final blow Kṛṣṇa crushed the demon to dust.

Kṛṣṇa looked like a blue sapphire locket hanging from the demon's throat. When they crashed on the ground the demon died, but Kṛṣṇa landed safely on the earth. Seeing this amazing feat, the Vrajavasis filled with joy. Though appearing as a mere baby, Kṛṣṇa proved His supremacy by displaying His unlimited potency. That great whirlwind demon, who showered dust, rain, and clumps of earth all over Vrndavana, touched Kṛṣṇa's body and attained the supreme fortune of becoming eligible for liberation. Thus Trnavarta did the best possible act to purify his family line.

When Yasoda could not find her son after the cessation of the storm, her heart turned into a desert of lamentation. At that time, she lost all patience, and unconsciousness personified appeared as her only companion. Feeling helpless and overwhelmed, Mother Yasoda collapsed on the earth. Though suffering immensely, Yasoda's faint breathing indicated that she still lived.

Understanding her intense pain of lamentation, the Vrajavasis tried to revive Yasoda by sprinkling water on her face and speaking comforting words. They said, "O pious and learned lady! The extent of your good fortune is unlimited. Your son gives happiness to the eyes of everyone. The honey-sweet dealings of Kṛṣṇa-kumara continually increase our attachment to Him. Due to your purity your son is still alive.

"O King and Queen of Vrndavana! Now we realize that all your fortune and prestige is caused by your illustrious son. Ma Yasoda! Although you are apprehensive about your son's safety, you can give up your distress, for the illusion has left our village. Do not let your mind burn any longer. Lift up your son and rejoice."

Thus reassured, Yasoda regained consciousness, but she was still in anxiety. She said, "Just a few minutes ago I could not tolerate the weight of my son so I put Him down, and then that demon captured Him. Can you explain how a tiny baby can suddenly become so heavy that even his mother cannot carry him? I guess this must be due to my bad luck. Alas! How could my son, who is as soft as butter and cannot even tolerate the pain of my lap, endure the tremendous pain generated by that demon who attacked Vrndavana with a shower of grass, high winds, and pieces of bricks?

"Previously Providence protected my son from the poisonous breasts of Putana and the falling cart demon. Now I pray to Him to always protect my beloved son. Alas! I got my son back because of the Lord's protection. From now on I will never take Him off my lap and put Him on the ground. Quickly help me find my son. Where is He? Has the wind demon snatched Him and carried Him away? As long as I live I will never again leave Him outside alone."

Saying this, Yasoda fell down unconscious. Sympathizing with the plight of Yasoda, the elderly *gopis* again tried to pacify her. Due to the burning fire

of lamentation, Yasoda's lotus face looked morose and took on the hue of a red lotus. Her sadness submerged the Vrajavasis in an ocean of distress.

On the outskirts of the village, where He had previously played upon the breast of Putana, Kṛṣṇa-kumara triumphed over His enemy by smashing him on the earth. This location brought success, just as victory is assured for one choosing a favorable constellation before fighting. While vanquishing that demon, Kṛṣṇa, the greatest of all relishers, looked like a blossoming *aparājitā* flower amidst a garden of thorns, or a blue lotus rising above a lake choked with tall reeds, or a small shining lamp atop a dense cloud of darkness. Kṛṣṇa stood as the embodiment of transcendental knowledge amidst an ocean of ignorance. He resembled a river of nectar flowing in a desert, or a flower of personified bliss atop of a tree of misery.

Seeing the beautiful blue baby in a safe position, the crowds gradually dispersed. One person commented, "This low-class, faithless demon has kept the demigods from blessing us with their association. Taking the form of a whirlwind, he prevented all auspicious acts and tortured Mother Earth. Finally he destroyed himself by the reaction of his heinous sin of attempting to kidnap the Prince of Vṛndavana. Since he did even have enough piety to approach Kṛṣṇa's house, he died outside of town instead."

Someone else said, "O look at this boy! He is the eternal Parabrahma and the Supreme Personality of Godhead! The effulgence of His unlimited opulence is always expanding. He is an invincible razor sharp sword annihilating the *asuric* kings with His awesome power. From the very beginning, Kṛṣṇa established the glories of His name by killing the Putana demon. It is He who freed everyone from distress by destroying Sakatasura. He also demolished that demon who terrorized the three worlds."

Another Vrajavasi said, "Like King Indra, Nanda Maharaja must have performed severe austerities and done many good deeds to accrue such vast piety. As a result, Nanda Baba received a boon that enabled his son to defeat formidable *asuras* like Putana and others. There is no other way to explain how all these demons met their death."

Having accepted Kṛṣṇa as the wealth of their lives, the Vrajavasis rejoiced upon finding Him free from danger. Picking Him up in their loving arms, they carried Kṛṣṇa into Yasoda's inner chambers. The atmosphere filled

with the happy news of Kṛṣṇa's well-being. Witnessing the pleasure of the Vrajavasis also brought waves of bliss to the mind of Asurari, Kṛṣṇa, the destroyer of demons.

Observing this joyful pastime of Kṛṣṇa, the elderly *gopis* smiled and said, "Hey Bhagavati! You are worshipable by everyone in the world. Due to your good fortune your son is now safe and happy." Such reassuring words greatly pleased the mind of Yasoda. When rain clouds forcefully pour water on a burned out forest, a fresh abundance of life reappears to beautify that forest with elegance and contentment. In a similar way, Yasoda looked refreshed and beautiful upon regaining her beloved son.

Though happy, Yasoda felt somewhat anxious and confused by the unusual event. In this state of bewilderment she said, "Where is He? Where is He?" Compassionately taking charge of Yasoda, the Vrajavasis gradually nursed her back to consciousness. At that time Yasoda's eyes looked like a pair of lotus flowers moistened with cool drops of dew. Her name, fame, and position surpass everyone in creation. Waking from her trance, Yasoda stood up and drowned in an ocean of joy upon beholding her all-attractive son.

Other ladies glorified Kṛṣṇa-kumara, "Hey Kṛṣṇa! Hey Kṛṣṇa!" A dying man receives new life by taking *sanjivani rasa*. Similarly, Yasoda, who nearly died in separation, revived upon meeting her dearest son Kṛṣṇa. She felt she had retrieved an invaluable lost treasure. Sitting Kṛṣṇa on her lap, she lovingly gazed at Him with unblinking eyes. But being only semi-conscious, Yasoda could not relish the full bliss of Kṛṣṇa's direct association.

As her sleeping senses awoke in the service of her beloved son, she said, "O darling! From the time of Your birth You have caused so much trouble to Your mother. Of course, this is not Your fault, so how can I blame You? I am the one who left You outside and unprotected. This shows my heart is as dry as wood, and therefore I qualify as Your mother in name only. But since I am known as Your mother, You have never treated me cruelly.

"Although that demon kidnapped You, because of Your innocence You somehow escaped and returned. O my beloved! Your love for me is

unprecedented and transcendental. I should be punished for my grave mistake.”

Out of intense motherly affection, Mother Yasoda suckled Kṛṣṇa with her breast milk and put Him to rest. Although appearing in a human form to act as the son of Yasoda, Kṛṣṇa-kumara eternally exists as the personification of transcendental bliss.

Chapter Five: Kṛṣṇa's Yawning and Name Giving Ceremony Stealing Butter, Eating Clay and Visvarupa Darsana

Kṛṣṇa's Yawning and Childhood Pranks

Yasoda felt as if she had attained the ultimate fulfillment of all desires by having Kṛṣṇa as her son. Gazing at the lotus face of her darling pleased her more than pleasure itself. One day Kṛṣṇa yawned while Vrajesvari breast fed Him. His yawning face appeared like a fully blossoming lotus flower. Yasoda saw the earth and all its trees, mountains, oceans, and cities situated in Kṛṣṇa's mouth. She also saw both herself and Nanda Maharaja within His mouth. Perceiving this touch of her son's transcendental opulence overwhelmed Yasoda with astonishment. What more can be said?

On another day when Yasoda breast fed Kṛṣṇa, she glanced lovingly at His lotus face and said, "O my darling son! Please open Your mouth so I can see if any baby teeth have come in yet." Yasoda saw His baby teeth looking just like tiny drops of her breast milk. In this way Kṛṣṇa fulfilled the desires of everyone, just as the rising moon creates happiness in all directions with its soothing rays. Everyday it appeared that Pusti-devi, the goddess of satisfaction, directly served Kṛṣṇa by ever increasing His pleasure. Sometimes Yasoda held Kṛṣṇa to her breast, and other times Nanda carried Him about on his shoulders.

Although Kṛṣṇa is beyond the force of time, rules, and regulations, by His free will He seemed to be following the laws governing human beings. At this time, Kṛṣṇa, whose body is softer than the petals of a lotus, crawled around Nanda's courtyard on His hands and knees. Hearing the sweet tinkling of His own waist-bells, Kṛṣṇa stopped moving and looked with surprise. Turning His conch-shell shaped neck, He glanced curiously over His shoulder. Seeing these childish antics of Kṛṣṇa filled Mother Yasoda's heart with inconceivable joy.

Crawling across the room, Kṛṣṇa eventually came to the door leading outside. Birds sat on the arches over the jewel-inlaid doorway. Seeing the birds' forms reflected in the jewels, Kṛṣṇa tried to touch them with His soft

reddish fingers, which resembled the pink color (*aruna*) of the sky at dawn. The elderly *gopis* relished these simple yet sublime pastimes of Kṛṣṇa-kumara.

Kṛṣṇa is completely made of transcendental consciousness, yet He appears to act like an ordinary human child. Although He has assumed a charmingly soft and enchantingly beautiful form, He is actually the concentrated form of the Absolute Truth. Just for fun Kṛṣṇa crawled around like a little baby pretending to be learning about the world. By such pastimes He filled the Vrajavasi ladies with joy.

Sometimes the elderly *gopis* joked with Kṛṣṇa and affectionately asked Him, “Point to Your face. Point to Your ear. Where are Your eyes?” Kṛṣṇa answered by touching those parts with His delicate leaf-like fingers. The ladies continued, “Kṛṣṇa, show us Your teeth.” Kṛṣṇa put His lotus hand to His mouth, smiled and replied shyly, “My teeth have not yet come out.”

The wife of Upananda asked Kṛṣṇa, “Who is Your father? Who is Your mother? Please tell us.” Again beaming that irresistible smile, Kṛṣṇa-kumara pointed toward Yasoda and Nanda Baba with His leaf-like hand. The Vraja *gopas* thrilled with bliss to see this.

One nurse, brimming with maternal affection, tested Kṛṣṇa’s speaking ability. She said, “Can you say the names of Your parents?” Kṛṣṇa answered with distinct, softly spoken words. Then to everyone’s amazement, Kṛṣṇa-kumara transgressed the rules of Sanskrit by combining the first syllable of the word *mātā* (mother) and the second syllable of the word *tāta* (father) and said, “*MāTa*” again and again.

Sometime later Kṛṣṇa crawled into a room full of gems and jewels, and became afraid upon seeing His own reflection in the jewels. In His enchantment He tried to erase the reflection with His hand. But He could not remove the image at all. Overcome with fear, Kṛṣṇa climbed up on Yasoda’s lap in order to escape.

Kṛṣṇa tried to stand up and take a few steps on His own. Falling on His bottom, He would look unhappily at Yasoda and cry for a moment. To encourage Him, Yasoda held Kṛṣṇa’s finger and walked beside Him. Then that lotus face, which had previously wilted from crying, blossomed with a

bright smile. Thus Kṛṣṇa brought great joy to mother Yasoda with His moonlike face which bathed His body in the nectar of gentle beauty.

One day Radharani's grandmother Mukhara played a joke on Kṛṣṇa by asking, "O darling! Go fetch the large clay pot, the low wooden seat, and the drinking cup." With a mild smile on His face Kṛṣṇa gingerly held some of the articles in His hands while balancing the remainder on His gorgeous belly. After walking some distance Kṛṣṇa rested a little, and then slowly lifted those articles and brought them all to Mukhara. The heavy items that He could not lift, He just touched and left alone.

Then the wives of Upananda and Sunanda arrived and asked Vrajaraja Nanda if they could see Kṛṣṇa. Due to having previously worshiped great devotees like Narada Muni and others, the wives of Upananda and Sunanda achieved the rare fortune of seeing the charming lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. They lifted Kṛṣṇa onto their laps and said, "O darling! You are the son of the King, so just drop these things. Such work is not proper for You." Then they rebuked Mukhara and threw away the things Kṛṣṇa had carried.

In so many ways the village ladies joked with Kṛṣṇa. One elderly *gopi* said, "O my beloved Kṛṣṇa! If You dance for me, I will give You some sweet butter." Kṛṣṇa danced with delight for the pleasure of Yasoda and the *gopis* by gracefully moving His legs and gesturing artfully with His hands. At another time, one *gopi* smiled and said, "What is that, darling, that looks like a golden doll? Is that beautiful golden line adorning Your chest Your wife?" Everyone laughed when Kṛṣṇa agreed by smiling and slightly moving His head from side to side.

At other times Yasoda affectionately dressed Kṛṣṇa with exquisitely fine, beautiful yellow cloth that complemented His attractive waist. Unaccustomed to such opulent dress, Kṛṣṇa felt bothered by it so He tried to take it off while frowning and crying. Yasoda greatly enjoyed watching Kṛṣṇa throw away His clothes. Once the housewives of Vrndavana sat in a lonely place braiding Yasoda's hair and decorating her with her favorite jewelry. Suddenly restless Kṛṣṇa snatched the ornaments from Yasoda's body, and tried to put them on again in the wrong places.

Thus Kṛṣṇa, with a splendid necklace hanging from His chest, gradually completed His crawling pastimes (*carana bihara*). Watching the babyhood

pastimes of his beloved son immersed Vrajaraja Nanda in an ocean of bliss. Now we will describe more of Kṛṣṇa-Balarama's nectarean pastimes. In order to see Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes the demigods had previously worshiped Devaki. But even more venerable than the demigods is Rohini, the mother of Balarama, who had performed an unlimited number of pious deeds. She existed as the embodiment of piety.

That person whom Rohini carried within her womb took birth before Lord Kṛṣṇa. Rohini was famous because her son manifested both the majesty and the sweet love of the Absolute Truth. All the great sages and realized saints have glorified Rohini, the mother of Baladeva. Kṛṣṇa and Balarama behaved just like ordinary human children. The beautiful display of Their pastimes seemed like the movements of emerald and crystal. When They played together Kṛṣṇa and Balarama looked like a monsoon cloud and moonbeams, a white lotus and a blue lotus, a pure white swan gliding on the ice blue waves of the Yamuna, or a ray of moonlight shining through the darkest night. The fantastic transcendental pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama far surmounted the frivolous play of ordinary children.

The spiritual bodies of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama glistened like the attractive glow of blue sapphires and pure crystals. When Balarama embraced His brother in a playful mood of ecstasy, Kṛṣṇa looked like a blue jewel held within a conchshell. Seeing the mixture of Their brilliant effulgences, Yasoda could not tell Them apart. At such times she often mistook Kṛṣṇa for Balarama. During Their childhood, Kṛṣṇa and Balarama behaved very naughtily. Taking sticks in Their hands They used to chase ferocious animals. Sometimes they ran into blazing forest fires, or dashed in front of proud bulls while fearlessly trying to grab their long horns. These actions terrified Yasoda and Rohini, and filled them with apprehension and concern for their beloved boys.

The Name Giving Ceremony of Kṛṣṇa

Vasudeva, the embodiment of pure goodness, sent the famous priest Garga Muni to Gokula to perform the name giving ceremony of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama. By his purity, Vasudeva blessed everyone and liberated his ancestors from their sinful reactions. Because of having perfectly controlled his senses, his fame spread in every direction for all time. The essence of

yajna is *mantra*, and the essence of Garga Rsi was his vast intelligence, which he used to give expert advice. As Kapila Muni had previously described the twenty-four elements of material nature, Garga Muni explained the truth of the planetary movements. He perfectly understood the four *Vedas* and the twenty-two different intonations of chanting Vedic *mantras*. As the ocean is the source of all rivers, Garga Rsi stood as a rich storehouse of all branches of Vedic knowledge.

As the sun removes darkness and manifests simultaneously in many places, Garga Muni destroyed the ocean of ignorance and became famous everywhere for his austerities. He also established a dynasty in his name. As clouds gather over Mt. Sumeru, the best of mountains, and pour profuse rain during the monsoon season, wherever Garga Muni stayed in Vrndavana he showered everyone with unlimited joy. Due to his exceptional character, he brought good fortune to all. Garga Muni, the *acarya* of the Yadu dynasty, did not immediately disclose the reason for his visiting Nanda Maharaja. Vrajaraja Nanda received him respectfully, offered obeisances, worshiped him, and washed his feet. Serving the great sage filled Nanda's heart with remarkable bliss.

Afterwards Nanda Maharaja took Garga Muni to a private place, sprinkled the sage's *caranamrta* on his head, and spoke submissively, "O best of the sages! Saints of your caliber show compassion to others by your exemplary behavior. You remove the sufferings of birth, death, disease, old age, and other miseries. Without a doubt, sages like you sanctify the world. Indeed, I have attained unlimited fortune by drinking your *caranamrta*. Simply a particle of dust from the feet of a realized soul like you, who possesses all auspicious qualities, can liberate the entire universe from mountains of sin. Those who worship saintly persons usually have many desires to fulfill. Simply by seeing you today the creeper of my desire has borne fruit.

"Although you are physically strong, you are devoid of desire. You act only to benefit others by relieving their distress. Your presence here has made my life successful, so I need not ask why you have come. But listen, I have something to say which you may not like. I am praying to you because you are famous throughout the world for your compassion and selflessness. Your glories illuminate the whole world.

“I am disturbed by various anxieties, but I feel somewhat afraid to approach you because of your exalted position. Nevertheless, since your heart is very soft, I feel inclined to reveal my mind to you. O Master! The fame of Anakadundubhi (Vasudeva) is heard throughout the world like the sound of a *dundubhi* drum. I will be pleased and indebted if you publicly announce the names of our two sons Rama and Kṛṣṇa. Please perform the necessary rituals for Their auspicious name-giving ceremony.”

Favorably inclined, Garga Muni replied, “O Vrajaraja! Your humility conquers the hearts of everyone, and your submissive request is free from pride and arrogance. As the soothing rays of the moon bring pleasure to the *kumuda* flower, I will satisfy your cherished desire in all respects. There is no one in this world like the wicked King Kamsa. He is notorious for his cruelty and cannot stand to see anyone else enjoy. He is like a poisonous fruit on a dangling creeper. He defeated the demigods and put everyone in distress. Now without any challenge, he has seized control of your country.

“Kamsa is always meditating upon the son of Vasudeva and inquiring about His whereabouts. He hisses loudly like a snake hiding in a mountain cave. He knows I am the *acarya* of the Yadu dynasty. Therefore, O Vrajaraja Nanda! If I perform the auspicious name giving ceremony of your son, then the inimical kings, who are moving amongst us in disguise, will immediately disclose the news to that wicked king. All the sinful kings of the Bhoja dynasty will treat us cruelly due to their malice. And among them, Kamsa is envious and malicious. As a fire burning within a tree causes continual pain, such kings give relentless suffering to others. It is very difficult, therefore, to execute this ceremony.”

Overwhelmed with lamentation over Garga Muni’s words, Nanda Maharaja replied, “O my Master! Your statements are certainly correct. Is there anyone alive who could be envious of you? O affectionate one! The foolish people will not know if we secretly hold the name-giving ceremony in my house. Besides our four eyes, there are no other eyes here to see.

“No one else will find out if we observe the ceremony along with my intimate family members. Since you are the embodiment of fortune, your presence alone can easily remove the misery of material existence. There is no need for the external pomp of drums, cymbals, and other musical

instruments. You alone can perform the ceremony by chanting all the necessary hymns and *mantras*.”

Garga Muni’s face beamed happily upon hearing Nanda’s words. As a glass bowl of oil reveals the objects within it, Garga Muni’s executing this service showed his inner *prema rasa*. Mother Yasoda and Rohini then brought Kṛṣṇa and Rama before the great sage. While gazing at Kṛṣṇa, Garga Muni mused, “The body of this little boy holds within itself all the truths of the *Upanisads*, and He firmly establishes the existence of God. Is He a flower on the desire tree causing all our good fortune? Is His form the origin of the nectar ocean of condensed bliss? *Jnanis* see Him as Brahman or the Lord of the universe. Mental speculators see Him as the creator. Mystic *yogis* see Him as the Supersoul and saintly devotees worship Him as Bhagavan.

“Although beyond the influence of time and space, that very same Personality of Godhead plays in the lap of His pure devotees Nanda and Yasoda. O what an amazing sight! Is He the causeless origin of a beautiful light within the dense darkness of ignorance? Ah! His form is completely astonishing. Though reclining on the lap of His mother, He floods my heart with a stream of joy. His *darsana* satisfies my eyes like a lamp of cooling camphor. The fragrance of His body resembles the sweet smell of burning *aguru* and sandalwood.”

“Kṛṣṇa causes my body to manifest ecstatic symptoms such as shaking, hair standing erect and mental bewilderment. I came here to do His name giving ceremony, but if this joyous state continues it will be impossible for me to do it.”

Considering the situation, Garga again pondered, “If I hold on to His feet everyone will say, ‘This Garga Muni has gone crazy.’ If I embrace Him to my chest people will say I am acting frivolously. Alas! If I hold back and do nothing, I will become filled with anxiety and lose my patience. But never mind; let it be like this. Today my life has really become fortunate. My eyes have attained perfection, my learning and exalted birth have now become blessed. The Lord has shown His compassion upon me and made my life successful by making me the *acarya* of the divine Yadu dynasty.”

Thinking thus, Garga Muni simultaneously drank nectar and bathed in an ocean of bliss. Due to this he seemed to be sleeping though awake; to be in illusion though wise; to have fallen unconscious though alive; to be blind though seeing; to be deaf though hearing; to be speaking though appearing dumb, and to be frivolous though patient.

Yasoda and Rohini brought Kṛṣṇa and Rama to Garga Muni. Full of all good fortune, these two boys remove all misfortune. Before naming the children, Garga Muni blessed Them by chanting auspicious *mantras*. After dispelling all negative elements, Garga Muni selected appropriate names and initiated the ceremony saying, “The son of Vasudeva is as powerful as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and He shall be named Bala because He possesses extraordinary power. In the future He will enjoy wrestling so He will also be called Baladeva. Sometimes His friends will defeat Him in the sport of cracking jokes. At that time they will say, ‘O Deva! Now show us your strength.’ For His relishing of *hasya rasa* (mellow of humor), He will be called Balarama.

“He is the personification of fame and perfection and more glorious than the creator. Since He will attract all people and remove their sins, the name Sankarsana also befits Him. Handsome and pleasing to everybody, this boy will become famous as Rama. Because He will show extraordinary strength while playing He will be called Balarama.

“As *bhakti-yoga* is found among the four castes, your youngest son appears in four colors: white, red, yellow, and dark blue. Although your son resembles the hue of a blue sapphire, in every millenium He manifests a different color to show His compassion. In Satya-yuga, the people lived religious lives free from sin. Your son appeared in that age in a white color. In Treta-yuga, fire had three names: *dakṣine-āgni*, *gārhapatya-āgni*, and *āhavānya-āgni*. In that age your son appeared as the combination of these three fires known as Yajña. In Dvapara-yuga, the Lord appears in a dark blue color resembling the *śyāma* color (dark blue complexion) of your son. In Kali-yuga, the age of quarrel, He has a golden color.

“He will be addressed as Kṛṣṇa which is a combination of five letters: *ka*, *ri*, *ṣa*, *ṇa*, *a*. By the first four letters of His name He assumed the different colors of the four *yugas*. His present *śyāma* color signifies Viṣṇu, which is indicated by the last letter of Kṛṣṇa’s name. Therefore, He, who now

assumes the color of a blue sapphire, is the origin of all the other *yuga avatars* and shall be known as Kṛṣṇa.

“He will be called Kṛṣṇa for His ability to attract the hearts of His lovers and take away the sins of His devotees. The word *kṛṣi* means existence and the letter *ṇa* signifies bliss. His primary name is Kṛṣṇa because He is the personification of bliss and eternality. Sometimes your younger son combines with Yogamaya to appear as the son of the liberated soul Vasudeva. For this reason He will also be known throughout the world as Vāsudeva. Your son has all the qualities of Narayana such as mercy, forgiveness, truthfulness, and cleanliness. Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, has put these concepts in my mind. Although Narayana is equal to Kṛṣṇa, your son is the origin and Narayana is His expansion. Since your son possesses the power to maintain the universe, everyone will call Him Narayana.

“Not only Sarasvati proclaims this, but I also agree. My words fail to reach the extent of your son’s unlimited glories. Nanda Maharaja! You are fortunate to have such a phenomenal child. By His mercy you will easily overcome all difficulties now and in the future. Not only that, but anyone who loves your son will have all his desires fulfilled. Though the *pandits* have attained the rare fortune of knowing everything, still they will not be able to fathom the identity of your son. Do not reveal this confidential truth to anyone.”

Then Garga Muni picked up Kṛṣṇa, who removes all distress, and placed Him on his lap. From the touch of Kṛṣṇa, the sage experienced ecstatic symptoms such as horripilation and hairs standing erect. At that moment Garga Muni thought, “Aha! This boy is displaying unprecedented effulgence. How can this child’s transcendental brilliance appear along with material objects such as *kajala*, a cloud, a blue lotus, and a blue sapphire? Expert *pandits* have explained this by saying that the *Brahman* has appeared on earth as the effulgence of your jewel-like son.”

After giving the boys a final loving embrace, Garga Muni placed Them on Nanda’s lap and prepared to leave. Nanda Maharaja stood up and respectfully escorted Garga Muni outside.

Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes of Stealing Butter

Kṛṣṇa's pastimes of crawling about and drinking His mother's breast milk gradually stopped. Soon He walked on His lotus feet and started stealing butter. Is there anyone who did not feel unlimited bliss when the Lord, who is the very source of bliss, enacted His childhood pastimes?

One day when no one was looking, Kṛṣṇa began His pastimes of stealing fresh butter. Startled upon seeing His own reflection in a jeweled inlaid pillar, He shivered in fear and said, "O dear brother, do not tell mother. I will save some butter for You and You may enjoy too." Watching her mischievous son from a hidden place, Mother Yasoda heard these sweet broken words with great relish. Then she innocently appeared before Kṛṣṇa and Rama.

Pointing to His effulgent reflection, Kṛṣṇa said, "O Ma! Being very greedy, this boy came here today in order to steal your butter. Although I forbade Him, He did not listen to Me. And when I got angry with Him, He also got angry. But I am not at all greedy for butter."

One day while Yasoda was outside the house engaged in some domestic activities, inside the house Kṛṣṇa stole butter again. When Yasoda returned and called out, "O my darling Kṛṣṇa! Where are You and what are You doing?" Hearing her, Kṛṣṇa became afraid and stopped stealing butter. Pausing for a moment, He answered, "Mother! My hand started burning from the shining effulgence of My ruby bangles, so I stuck it in this butter pot to relieve the pain."

Pleased by her son's clever words, Yasoda said, "Hey Vatsa! Please come sit on my lap. O My darling, show me the burns on Your hand." Then Yasoda kissed Kṛṣṇa's hand and consoled Him, saying, "Ahh...ahh... Look, Your hand has been burned. So let me remove these ruby bangles."

On another day Kṛṣṇa cried and rubbed His eyes with His flower bud-like palms. In a choked voice He uttered unintelligible phrases. Even though Yasoda had previously scolded Kṛṣṇa for stealing butter, this time she wiped the tears from His eyes with the edge of her *sari*. While tenderly caressing Kṛṣṇa, She said, "Hey Lala, all of our stock of butter actually belongs to You alone."

One night the soothing rays of the full moon illumined the courtyard of Nanda's house. Yasoda sat there talking with some elderly *gopis* while

Kṛṣṇa played nearby gazing at the moon. Sneaking up behind Yasoda, Kṛṣṇa removed the veil covering her head, loosened her braid, and patted her on the back to get her attention with His butter-soft lotus palms. His voice choked up as He continually cried. Yasoda's heart swelled with maternal love, so she indicated with a glance that her friends should attend to Kṛṣṇa.

With great respect and affection the *gopis* enthusiastically lifted up Kṛṣṇa and asked, "O darling! What do You want? Do You want some *khira*?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "No, No!" "Do You want some thick creamy yogurt?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "No, No!" "Do you want some cheese?" Again Kṛṣṇa said, "No, no! I want freshly churned condensed butter." The *gopis* continued, "Do not lament or be angry with Your mother. What do You mean by 'condensed butter?' " Pointing His little index finger to the full moon, Kṛṣṇa replied, "I want that freshly churned condensed butter!"

The elderly *gopis* said, "O Vatsa! Do not mistake the moon for a huge piece of butter. It is a *rajahamsa* (royal swan) gliding across the lake of the sky." Kṛṣṇa said, "Then give Me that *rajahamsa* so I can play with him. Quickly catch him before he reaches the bank of the lake. Full of anxiety, Kṛṣṇa kicked His legs and cried loudly, "Give Me! Give Me!"

While Kṛṣṇa showed His childish antics, some other *gopis* said, "O darling! They have lied to You. What You see is not a *rajahamsa*, but it is the moon hanging in the sky and it is called Candra." Kṛṣṇa said, "Then give Me that Candra! I really want it so I can play with it. Right now! Get it!"

Yasoda placed her crying son on her lap and comforted Him, "Darling! Actually it is freshly churned condensed butter! Definitely, it is not a *rajahamsa* nor is it the moon. Regardless, I can never give it to You. Just see by chance or by the arrangement of Providence it has poisonous spots on it. Although it looks very tasty, no one in this world can eat it."

Then Kṛṣṇa said, "Mother, mother! Why is it stained with spots of poison? What is poison anyway?" Seeing a change in Kṛṣṇa's mood, mother Yasoda embraced Him and spoke in a gentle, sweet voice. "Listen attentively my dearest son. There is an ocean of milk called Ksira-sagara."

Kṛṣṇa: "Mother please tell Me about that? How many milk cows made that ocean?"

Yasoda: “Darling, the milk ocean was not made by cows.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Mother, you are lying to Me. How can there be milk without cows?”

Yasoda: “The one who gave cows the ability to produce milk can also make milk even without cows.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Who is He?”

Yasoda: “He is the Lord, the cause of creation. He is Bhagavan. He is immovable and all pervading. Although He is everywhere, I cannot show Him to You.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Well mother, are you telling Me the truth?”

Yasoda: “Long ago the demigods and the demons had a fight. To favor the demigods and bewilder the demons, the Lord churned the ocean of milk. Mandara Mountain served as the churning rod and Vasuki, the king of the serpents, offered his body for the rope. The demons and demigods stood on opposite sides pulling that rope.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Mother, did they churn the way the *gopis* do?”

Yasoda: “Yes my son. The churning of the Ksira-sagara produced a poison named *kalakuta*.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Mother, how did churning milk produce poison? Only snakes have poison.”

Yasoda: “Darling, Mahadeva drank that poison. But the snakes drank the drops of poison that fell from his mouth. As a result, they now have poison. The poison rising from that milk is also the energy of the Lord.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Yes mother that is indeed true.”

Yasoda: “Darling, this condensed butter You are seeing in the sky is produced from that Ksira-sagara. That is why the moon is spotted with the remnants of that poison. Look carefully, do You see it? Therefore, do not try to eat that butter, but please take my freshly churned butter instead.” After hearing this description, Kṛṣṇa felt sleepy so mother Yasoda put Him to rest in an opulent golden bed on a fluffy soft mattress, whiter than powdered camphor.

The next morning Yasoda brought butter, yogurt and other eatables into Kṛṣṇa’s room. Lovingly fondling His body, she said, “Wake up! God forbid,

You seem to be weak from not eating sufficiently yesterday.” After Kṛṣṇa awoke, Yasoda cleansed His mouth with scented water. Then she offered Him a golden plate full of butter, yogurt and other delights while saying, “O my beloved son, take whatever You like.”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “Mother, I will not eat anything that you have brought Me. Last night you lied to Me and put Me to sleep. And I felt very distressed due to hunger.” Yasoda said, “Kṛṣṇa, if You went to sleep then who stole the butter?” Kṛṣṇa replied, “Mother, when did I steal your butter? You are lying.” With His charming transcendental pastimes Kṛṣṇa continually captivated the heart of mother Yasoda.

Sometimes while roaming in the courtyard Kṛṣṇa caught a stray calf, put it on His lap, and kissed it with His lotus mouth. Seeing this Yasoda felt both pleased and apprehensive. In the pasturing ground Kṛṣṇa sometimes grabbed the tail of a calf. Startled, the calf would jump up and run away dragging Kṛṣṇa, dressed only by the wind, behind him. Thus the uncovered *Brahman* personified stole the hearts of the Vrajavasis.

Sometimes, Kṛṣṇa smeared cow dung all over Himself. Seeing it as musk covering His body, the Vrajavasis enjoyed a festival of beauty. How can there be any inebriety in the one who is beauty personified? At other times, Yasoda tied a very attractive turban on Kṛṣṇa’s head, and dressed Him in gorgeous yellow garments. After marking His body with *tilaka* the color of *gorocana*, she would anoint His lotus eyes with soft *kajala*.

Adopting the mood of an ordinary mother, Yasoda placed her saliva on Kṛṣṇa’s forehead to prevent people from casting an evil eye on her son, whose sublime elegance enchants the entire creation. While playing in the courtyards of the *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa often wore a necklace of tiger nails set in gold and a waist belt bedecked with costly jewels.

Once the Vraja *gopis* talked amongst themselves, “Kṛṣṇa brings good fortune wherever He goes, and His presence make everyone’s life glorious. Who in this world is not enchanted by the frivolous and amusing childhood pastimes of Kṛṣṇa? Who cannot appreciate these mirthful activities?” Rather than getting upset, they felt the greatest happiness whenever Kṛṣṇa broke their clay pots and stole their butter.

Still the housewives of Vrndavana pretended to be angry and complained to Yasoda about Kṛṣṇa's stealing. In a mixed mood of love and laughter the *gopis* warned Yasoda, "O Queen of Vrndavana, Yasoda! In the future you will suffer for the mischievous acts of your son. Although now your son is like a young sprout with tender leaves, already He is disrupting the whole creation. But be careful, in the future when this tender sprout grows into a tree full of leaves and branches, He will bring you tremendous pain. Now your boy's adventures are just beginning, but by nature they are forever expanding. Your son's naughty behavior will soon destroy our whole village. We have no idea what mischief He will do next.

"Before our cows have been milked, your son unties the calves and lets them drink all the milk. If someone tries to rebuke Him, He simply smiles sweetly, and that person immediately forgets all his anger. If we keep our butter in a dark storeroom, He uses His natural effulgence to easily find our stock and steal it. But instead of eating it Himself, He takes great pleasure in feeding it to the monkeys. When the monkeys reach their fill and refuse to eat more, Kṛṣṇa breaks the pot and throws the butter on the ground.

"He catches the butter pots which are beyond His reach by stacking many small tables on top of each of other, climbing them, and extending His arm to grab the pots. Kṛṣṇa is always stealing our butter and yogurt. If someone tries to stop Him, He immediately drops the food on the ground and quickly escapes. If by chance a housewife captures Him, Kṛṣṇa twists her wrist and runs away. Then from a safe distance He yells back, 'Hey just stay where you are! If you come any closer, I will give you even more trouble by teasing your babies and making them cry.'

"If someone calls, 'Hey thief, stop!' Kṛṣṇa becomes angry and shouts, 'You are the thief. This house is Mine and everything in this house belongs to Me.'

"In the morning we spread a fresh layer of clay on the outer walls of our houses, and paint beautiful designs on top of it with powdered limestone. Then your son Kṛṣṇa comes along to spoil everything by throwing dirt all over our houses. In front of you, Kṛṣṇa is so quiet and well behaved. But when He enters our homes He acts frivolously, steals our food, speaks sharp words, and becomes angry and greedy."

In this way the ladies of Vrndavana, pretending to be angry, made many complaints against Kṛṣṇa. But in reality Kṛṣṇa's joyous pranks filled everyone with pleasure. When accused by the *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa feigned innocence and shed false tears. Though culpable for His immoral acts of stealing and offending the villagers in various ways, Kṛṣṇa tried to minimize His misdeeds by speaking very sweetly.

Responding to the charges of the *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa said, "Mother, none of these ladies have any affection in their hearts. They are not speaking a single word of truth. Actually they are all liars, and have given up their human dignity. Whenever I see them or their sons I feel completely happy. Because of the natural affection I have for them, I regularly visit their homes every morning at sunrise.

"Ma, so knowing My motives you can easily understand they are deliberately telling lies. You should not believe them at all. Mother, since you are My worshipable superior, from now on I will not visit My friends any more." Saying this, Kṛṣṇa sobbed and cried.

Vrajesvari Yasoda put Kṛṣṇa on her lap and smiled shyly at the *gopis* in order to conceal her real mood. Then just to please Kṛṣṇa, Yasoda said, "You *gopis* are all telling lies. Only Kṛṣṇa is telling the truth. He is just an innocent boy, so how could He possibly do such things. I think you have already scolded my son sufficiently." After saying this, Yasoda spoke affectionately with the *gopis*. Then as a friendly gesture, Rohini applied *tilaka* to their foreheads and sent them home.

After the departure of the *gopis*, Yasoda, who is expert in the laws of etiquette, spoke to Kṛṣṇa, "My son, because of greed You performed many improper acts in the homes of our friends. Although in Your own home such behavior is acceptable, in the home of another it is totally unbecoming. O beautiful one! These deeds of Yours were not good at all. From now on just stay here and play." After instructing her son Yasoda caressed Him lovingly.

Just then Vrajaraja Nanda arrived and brightened the room with his favorable feelings. Nanda spoke pleasing words to encourage and pacify his charming son. "O Vatsa! Come sit on my lap." Leaving Yasoda's lap, Kṛṣṇa

climbed up on Nanda's lap and wrapped His arm around His father's neck. Then Kṛṣṇa said softly, "Why is mother chastising Me for nothing?"

Nanda responded, "What is this all about?"

That fabulous boy of oceanic intelligence replied, "Mother, now tell truthfully what happened."

Then mother Yasoda recounted the misdeeds of Kṛṣṇa by repeating the words uttered by the *gopis*.

Pointing to Queen Yasoda, Vrajaraja Nanda said, "My son is faultless. He has not done anything wrong. I always see Him behaving nicely. By siding with those who made fun of Him and with those who showed envy toward my jewel-like son, you have wrongly accused my well-behaved son and so you should be punished." Concealing his real mood behind these words, Nanda rebuked Yasoda and comforted his son: "O my darling son, just stay in my lap and do not go to anyone else."

Though hearing His father's words, Kṛṣṇa immediately jumped off his lap just like an unpredictable child, and quickly climbed on Yasoda's lap. Seeing this gave both parents a hearty laugh.

Kṛṣṇa Plays in the Village

One day Vrajaraja Nanda and Yasoda spoke about their son, the vanquisher of many demons. "When Kṛṣṇa is out playing He likes to wander off alone leaving the powerful Balarama behind. We should hire someone to supervise Their play, and send some expert servants to accompany Them. Let them wander all over Vṛndavana serving our two boys." Shortly later, Nanda engaged some servants to take care of his boys.

Every morning after leaving their respective houses, the cowherd boys came to the home of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama. The meeting of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama with Their friends and servants looked like a king meeting his ministers and advisors. As a baby elephant picks up dirt with his trunk and throws it all around, Kṛṣṇa entered the open fields of the village, and playfully covered Himself and His friends with *vraja-raja* (dust of Vṛndavana). At this time Kṛṣṇa used to sport with both young boys and girls of the same age. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa quarreled with the *gopas* and *gopis*

and beat them, and other times they beat Him. Kṛṣṇa responded by laughing, getting angry, or by not reacting at all.

Playing in the dirt Kṛṣṇa, built houses, a toy wall, or a small town. Other times He broke the dirt houses of His friends and they broke His. When Kṛṣṇa rebuilt His house, they would break it again. While curiously observing these antics from the sky, the demigods thought, “Simply by His glance thousands of unlimited universes come into existence and then again are dissolved. Instead of bothering with that work, He now plays in the dirt making roads, homes, and villages. Although He is becoming exhausted from doing this, He does not give it up.” Kṛṣṇa’s perplexing pastimes captivated the minds of the demigods. While Kṛṣṇa delighted in the dirt, He looked like the sun shining in the sky.

The housewives of Vṛndavana, full of motherly affection, addressed Kṛṣṇa with sweet words, “O darling boy! Please come to our beautiful courtyards, play with our children, and take some food.” Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa smiled and replied softly, “I cannot come because I do not have any spare time.” Thus the all-attractive beloved of every mother’s heart cleverly responded to the elderly *gopis*. Anxious to express their motherly affection toward Kṛṣṇa, these impatient *gopis* held His hand and hurried to their homes. In their eyes, fortune had blessed Kṛṣṇa alone as the sole recipient of matchless beauty. Brimming with love, the elderly *gopis* served Kṛṣṇa by rubbing His body and bathing Him. With great devotion they fed Him butter, *rābri* and *kṣīra*, and then sent Him home.

Kṛṣṇa Eats Clay

One day Kṛṣṇa ate some clay in order to expand the glories of His beloved land of Vṛndavana and to purify the universe. Upon seeing that, Balarama, who possesses keen powers of discrimination, and a group of cowherd boys ran to tell mother Yasoda. “Mother! Kṛṣṇa cannot control His mind. Out of greed He just ate some clay! Despite our rebukes, He just keeps eating more and more.”

On hearing such harsh words about her son, Mother Yasoda felt disturbed. Her eyebrows raised in anger, she grabbed a bundle of sticks and quickly ran out of the house. Finding Kṛṣṇa, she said. “Hey You naughty boy! Why did You eat clay? Didn’t I give You enough sweets? Who can enjoy eating

clay? Just as we caught You before doing mischief in others' homes, now we caught You again. Don't You realize that You cannot hide Your faults? Your elder brother and friends are always there to witness all Your misbehavior."

In fear of His mother, Kṛṣṇa tried to conceal His faults. Though performing many mischievous deeds, He pretended to be completely innocent, and poured profuse tears from His lotus eyes. In order to counteract the charges, Kṛṣṇa said emphatically, "Mother! I did not eat any clay. They are all lying. If you do not believe Me, then just look in My mouth." Vrajesvari Yasoda replied, "Alright, open Your mouth."

Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of unlimited power and the abode of good fortune, smiled and opened His lotus mouth. Mother Yasoda saw Bhuloka and the seven islands amidst limitless oceans. Bhuloka extended for a great distance with varieties of human beings and roaring rivers along its edges. Both small and large forests covered its surface. Trees wrapped with flowering creepers blowing in the wind spread in all directions.

Lions and many types of animals inhabited its huge mountain chains. She saw the lower planetary systems including Nagaloka and the Nagapatnis serving their master. She saw the heavens complete with stars, planets, constellations, and the passing of the days. She saw the abodes of the celestials populated by Siddhas, Caranas, Gandharavas, and Vidyadharas. *Munis* such as Marichi, Atri, and other famous sages beautified that realm with their radiant auras. Beyond that, Yasoda saw Maharloka, Tapaloka, and other universes as well. Countless living entities from the insignificant insects up to demigods like Indra and Brahma inhabited those regions. Within Kṛṣṇa's mouth Yasoda also saw herself, Nanda Maharaja, Vrajadhama, and her son Nandanandana.

Upon marveling at these sights, mother Yasoda said, "What am I seeing? Am I dreaming? Is it the illusory energy? Is it a show of magic? Am I under a hypnotic spell?" This pastime put Yasoda into complete bewilderment. But after a moment, the wise Yasoda thought, "Indeed, this must have been a display of Kṛṣṇa's limitless power and opulence." Forgetting all these ideas, Yasoda tried to find out what had happened. Regardless of what she had seen, Yasoda felt that she must protect Kṛṣṇa.

Upon seeing that amazing universal form, mother Yasoda concluded that her son was a most extraordinary personality. She thought, “Mahadeva himself must be astounded by the majesty and influence of my son. Certainly Kṛṣṇa must be the supreme controller.” Although Kṛṣṇa revealed Himself as the supreme controller, due to the influence of Yogamaya, mother Yasoda continued to treat Him as her dependent son. In order to expedite the free exchange of sweet intimate love between Himself and His dear devotees, Kṛṣṇa quickly abandoned His mood as the Absolute Supreme Controller.

Chapter Six: Binding Sri Kṛṣṇa

Deliverance of the Yamala-arjuna Trees

The following episode occurred one day during Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes in Gokula. Though any number of maidservants could have done this chore, Yasoda tactfully engaged them elsewhere in order to show her expertise in preparing butter. With her own hands, which appeared as soft and elegant as lotus flowers, Yasoda personally churned butter for her beloved boy.

The beauty of her delicate arms put lotus stems to shame. As she rhythmically pulled the ropes back and forth, the jingling of her emerald-studded bangles resounded like the bells on the feet of a dancer. As Yasoda's hair loosened and became wet from the exertion of churning, it looked like the opened tail feathers of a jubilant peacock. When her hair braid untied, the jewels, flowers, and peacock feathers decorating it fell on the ground. As shooting stars beautify the dense darkness of night, similarly, these falling items increased the beauty of the earth.

The necklace on her raised breasts swung back and forth with the movements of her blouse. The shining effulgence emanating from her jeweled-earrings appeared like a constant flow of nectar. Bathed in the sweet mellow of maternal affection, Yasoda's neck and shoulders looked exceedingly beautiful. The ornamental belt surrounding her highly raised hips appeared captivating. The radiant gems and tinkling bells on that belt further increased its elegance. Drenched in a river of devotional perspiration, Yasoda's delicate body looked delightful. The sweetness of this scene defeated the beauty of seeing a swarm of intoxicated bees buzzing over a blooming lotus flower.

A loud sound resembling the roaring of the ocean rose out of the wide mouth of Yasoda's butter pot. The drops of yogurt spilling out of the pot and falling on the golden border of Yasoda's *sari* made it look even more attractive. As Yasoda passed the time remembering Kṛṣṇa, she recalled the enchanting look in her son's eyes whenever He got caught stealing butter. At that time He would proudly say, "Mother, you should know that I am expert in this art of stealing."

Kṛṣṇa felt hungry and anxious to drink Yasoda's breast milk. In a threatening voice, Kṛṣṇa said, "Either you stop to feed Me or I will break the churning pot." Suddenly, the one who churns the hearts of everyone in creation forcefully caught the churning rod. Yasoda stopped, sat Kṛṣṇa on her lap, and happily fed Him. While gazing at His loosely hanging curly dark blue hair, Yasoda's heart swelled with appreciation of Kṛṣṇa's wonderfully gentle nature.

Just at that time in the kitchen some boiling milk foamed up in a pot. Fearing it might spill over, Yasoda left her son and ran to the kitchen. This deeply pierced the core of Kṛṣṇa's heart. Becoming angry, He picked up a rock and broke the butter pot. Churned butter flowed in all directions across the floor.

In a fearful yet playful mood Kṛṣṇa ran through the butter and romped from room to room engaging in more mischief. Stealthily entering the milk storeroom, Kṛṣṇa quickly ate small amounts of freshly churned butter from various pots. From relishing His favorite food He soon felt satisfied and gave up His anger. Then Sri Hari, who is worshiped by all the demigods, snatched a pot of butter and ran into the courtyard.

The pastimes Kṛṣṇa enjoyed at this time appeared to be classic performances on a dramatic stage. While standing on a grinding mortar in the courtyard and anxiously looking around for mother Yasoda, Kṛṣṇa fed fresh butter to all the assembled children and monkeys. The fortunate Yasoda, whose jewel-like son benedicts the entire creation, took the boiling milk off stove and returned to Kṛṣṇa.

The fame of attaining Kṛṣṇa as her son enhanced the brilliant beauty of Yasoda's body. She wanted to embrace her son and console Him, but not finding Him there she became morose. In a mood of lamentation she frantically searched everywhere for Kṛṣṇa. She found some broken pots emitting innumerable streams of yogurt that flowed across the floor making it slippery and white in color. Out of anger, Kṛṣṇa had smashed many clay pots, which now lay strewn on the floor in hundreds of pieces.

Mother Yasoda thought, "Alas! What has happened? Why is this yogurt pot broken?" At first she could not understand, but upon seeing a small rock she concluded that Kṛṣṇa had perpetrated this naughty act. With a look of

surprise mother Yasoda touched the tip of her nose with the index finger of her beautiful left hand and thought, “How could my child show such impudence? I tried so patiently to train Him properly, so how could He behave so horribly.”

Although no impurities resided in her heart, Yasoda appeared to manifest a special form of motherly pride. Showing false anger, she thought, “The glories of my son’s transcendental pastimes are unlimited. His every action increases His own pride and pleasure while simultaneously creating a festival for one and all. He derives boundless happiness by His constant pastimes of stealing.”

As soon as Kṛṣṇa, who enchants the demigods with His beautiful body the color of a monsoon cloud, saw mother Yasoda coming out of the house, He jumped up in fear and ran away as fast as possible. Expertly understanding the human-like nature of her son, Yasoda chased after Him calling, “Stop running! Stop! O You foremost cheater in the world!”

Kṛṣṇa kept looking fearfully back over His shoulder while running away from Yasoda. Though Yasoda felt fatigued and mentally distressed, her body, arms, and legs looked very beautiful as she pursued her mischievous son. Full of pride and anger, Yasoda continued shouting to Kṛṣṇa, “Stop You thief and liar! How can you carry on like this? Where are You going? Just stop running and stand where You are!”

Kṛṣṇa said, “I will stop if you drop your stick.” After saying this Kṛṣṇa stopped running away, but kept a safe distance from His mother. Yasoda said, “If You are so afraid of being punished, then why did You break my yogurt pot today?”

Kṛṣṇa said, “I will never do it again. Now just drop the stick from your hand.” Yasoda’s mind turned into an abode of amazement as she tried to approach her son. But seeing her angry mood, Kṛṣṇa quickly ran away again while speaking in a distressed tone, “Mother! Please drop that big stick and do not punish Me! O sinless one, if you do this I will come to you.” After hearing Kṛṣṇa’s innocent appeal Yasoda dropped the stick.

Seeing this, Kṛṣṇa stopped running. Absorbed in watching Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental pastimes, the immortal denizens of heaven felt totally amazed. One can easily understand how powerful demigods like Lord

Brahma, who lives for trillions of years, became upset and bewildered upon seeing Kṛṣṇa's pastime of showing fear before His mother. They could not fathom how the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is feared by fear personified, ran away in fear of a stick in His mother's hand.

The fine hairs curling over Yasoda's face dripped with perspiration and her blouse moved from her heavy breathing. Her hair hung loose from running and her lotus face appeared exhausted. When she caught Kṛṣṇa's hand He said, "Mother please do not beat Me." While saying this Kṛṣṇa rubbed His tear-filled lotus eyes with His delicate palms which resembled the petals of a fresh lotus flower.

With a choked voice Kṛṣṇa slowly uttered some sweet yet indistinct words that came out from His beautiful mouth like drops of nectar falling from the full moon. Indeed, it was a marvelous sight to see Kṛṣṇa becoming overwhelmed in fear and crying helplessly. Yasoda thought, "If I do not bind Him immediately, He may run away into the deep forest." Yasoda then brought a grinding mortar and considered how to bind the one of boundless glories. Observing this, Kṛṣṇa beamed an attractive smile.

Yasoda ordered some maidservants, "O Kurangavati and Lavangavati, fetch some smooth soft rope made of jute." The attempt of Vrajesvari Yasoda to bind Kṛṣṇa, the ever well-wisher of the whole creation, immersed her in an ocean of joy. Soon many opulently dressed elderly *gopis*, the embodiments of limitless motherly affection, came there along with several curious boys with clean, beautiful curly hair.

Mother Yasoda tied many ropes together but they always measured two inches too short. Surprisingly, no matter how many ropes she collected they remained two inches too short. She said, "Alas! This small distance seems to have become as vast as Brahma's universe. The Supreme Lord enacts this pastime by His personal energy to display His unlimited power."

Observing this wonderful incident, the elderly *gopis* tried to relieve Yasoda's anxiety by saying, "O Yasoda! You are the most blessed one in creation. A minute ago you tied a small golden belt around Kṛṣṇa's thin waist, but now you cannot bind him with all the ropes in your house! Despite the number of ropes you tie together, they always end up two

inches too short. There is some strange cause behind this phenomenon, so you better stop trying to bind your son.”

In great astonishment Yasoda addressed the *gopis*, “O Vraja *gopis*! I have no more ropes, so please bring all the ropes stored in your houses.” It was not out of fear that the *gopis* gave all their ropes to Yasoda, but they did so in order to see Kṛṣṇa’s glorious transcendental character and relish His blissful pastimes. Feigning anger, Yasoda took all the additional ropes and tried again to bind her naughty son. While enjoying this scene, the doe-eyed housewives of Vrndavana laughed quietly while secretly tasting a special joy in their hearts.

All the blissful moods of spiritual love harmonized in Kṛṣṇa’s childhood pastimes. Though Kṛṣṇa’s hands were very delicate, His eyes soon pained from continually rubbing the tears falling from them. In a choked up voice He spoke some richly sweet words that captivated the minds of all. Finally, Kṛṣṇa cried in a gentle, honey sweet voice. Empathizing with Kṛṣṇa, close friends like Subala also wept along with their bosom friend.

Yasoda’s heart palpitated with her heavy breathing, her hair loosened, and the flowers fell to the ground. Perspiring, tired, overwhelmed, and her labors frustrated, Yasoda sat down to rest and figure out how to tie up Kṛṣṇa. A short time later she tried again to bind her matchless son. The elderly *gopis*, having lost all desire to return to their homes, stood motionless while staring at Kṛṣṇa with unblinking eyes.

Now all the ropes in Vrndavana joined in a fruitless attempt to bind the master of the universe. It is impossible to tie up bliss, wisdom, power, and consciousness, so how can anyone tie up Kṛṣṇa who is made of nothing but bliss, wisdom, power, and consciousness? How could Yasoda bind one who has no inside or outside, who is limitless, who has no beginning or end, who has infinite power, who is the totality of everything, who is completely full and beyond any contamination, and who is within and outside of everything? Viewing the situation, the all-powerful Supreme Lord decided to bestow His mercy upon Yasoda.

Even though mother Yasoda eagerly desired to tie up Kṛṣṇa, she met no success despite her total exhaustion. The endeavor of a devotee to bind the Lord can only be successful with the Lord’s sanction. All of Yasoda’s work

now bore fruit because Kṛṣṇa, out of compassion for her, suddenly allowed Himself to be bound. Extending His mercy, He saved His beloved mother from further anger and frustration.

Yasoda asked the assembled cowherd boys to watch Kṛṣṇa to prevent Him from untying Himself and running away. Then Yasoda and the elderly *gopis* entered her private chambers. The moment Yasoda left, Kṛṣṇa stopped crying, and His face assumed a peaceful and effulgent glow like the luminous moonshine.

Kṛṣṇa thought how to use His present bondage to fulfill a prophecy of Narada Muni. Previously Narada had cursed two intoxicated and indecent demigods named Nalakuvera and Manigriva to become trees. Deciding to bestow His mercy upon them, Kṛṣṇa dragged the grinding mortar tied to His belly along the ground toward those two trees. Kṛṣṇa's playmates cheerfully followed Him.

From a distance Kṛṣṇa saw the two trees connected at the root. Similarly, a student will understand that *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* originate from one source. As *karma kanda* and *jñāna kanda* are separate paths, the two trees had different trunks. The *Sama* and *Yajur Vedas* have various divisions, and similarly, the two trees had many branches. As a great king has the qualities of valor and achievement, as a mountain range possesses steadiness, and as a cluster of clouds is laden with showers, similarly, these two trees displayed an abundance of natural opulence.

The demigods embodied in the two trees had become purified by suffering many years in that way, just as clouds abound in the rainy season and as water becomes clear and pure in autumn. As the universe is vast and broad, these trees stood stout and strong. Known as a pair of *arjuna* trees, they reminded everyone of the great heroes Arjuna and Kartavirya. Like Nakula and Sahadeva, these two trees were also twins. Seeing Kṛṣṇa moving towards the huge trees, His friends said, "Perhaps Kṛṣṇa cannot tolerate the scorching sunshine so He is seeking shelter under those shady trees."

While His friends spoke thus, Kṛṣṇa pulled the mortar over and it got stuck between the two trees. He who annihilates all pretenders appeared splendid with His curly hair hanging loosely over His shoulders. Though Kṛṣṇa's

body is pure and spotless, His character is colored with wonderful varieties of *rasa*.

With a slight jerk of the mortar Kṛṣṇa easily uprooted those huge trees in a moment. A loud cracking sound filled the air when the trees split open. As a person pokes a hole in a clay pot, that unique vibration, which conquered all other sounds, raced through the sky to puncture a hole in the coverings of the universe. The sound exactly resembled the terrible noise produced by the fierce thunderbolts crashing at the time of devastation. Kṛṣṇa remained calm and joyful amidst the tremendous tumult.

Kṛṣṇa is eternally free, but He appeared to be bound to a grinding mortar. His character is eternally pure, but it was stained by His pastimes of stealing. Although He can liberate anyone trapped in material existence, He was bound by the loving affection of His mother.

At that time two effulgent persons emerged from the trees. Delivered from their curse, the two demigods offered prayers to Kṛṣṇa, “O embodiment of eternity and boundless bliss. You appear more attractive than a cluster of soft, beautiful dark blue rain clouds. All glories to You! All glories to You! No one can understand the mysteries of Your transcendental pastimes. You have appeared on earth just to enact Your splendid spiritual sports. Along with Your appearance came many mighty demons eager to fight with You. However You always exhibited greater power and easily defeated them in an artistic fashion.

“Even though just a tender boy, You have personally uprooted these two massive *arjuna* trees. You are definitely one without a second. You pour mercy upon everyone and bestow abundant affection to the fallen. As a common man enjoys different playful sports, You relish wonderful varieties of *rasa* in all Your pleasantly artistic transcendental pastimes.

“Truly You are the embodiment of auspiciousness appearing in Vṛndavana to benedict all the Vrajavasis. The moon, lord of the stars, becomes totally afflicted upon seeing the beautiful radiance of Your moon-like face. The natural glow of Your attractive lips surpasses the reddish color of a *bimba* fruit. You delight learned sages by cutting the dense vines of ignorance with the axe of Your mercy.

“Human intelligence cannot penetrate the fathomless ocean of Your transcendental pastimes. But one can attain Your lotus feet by following pure devotees. The words of the lotus-born Brahma, the blue-throated Mahadeva, and other demigods are always ornamented with descriptions of Your transcendental qualities. While Your effulgence alone displays complete and unlimited power, You personally perform various playful pastimes. Strands of jeweled necklaces adorn Your broad chest. Your feet deride the purity of land lotuses. Although You appear in specific forms in all four *yugas*, You have as many unlimited names and forms as there are stars in the sky. As the white incarnation Your glorious deeds were pure and faultless.

“O Lord of the three worlds! You quickly satisfy the desires of all the materialistic people who proudly proclaim, ‘This is mine!’ O master! We offer our respectful obeisances unto You. In this whole creation who can compare with You? You are one without a second! O Supreme Personality of Godhead! Who is not bewildered by Your illusory energy? O enchanter of all minds! You astonish everyone with Your matchless ability to do the impossible.

“O bliss personified! O darling son of Nanda Maharaja! As the crest-jewel among all the immortals who wander through the pleasure groves of Vrndavana, You perform superexcellent pastimes. Though using the choicest Sanskrit *ślokas*, the best of sages fail to properly praise You.

“You exist simultaneously as formless bliss and bliss personified. In either gross or subtle forms, You alone exist everywhere. You exhilarate both Your humble servants and the realized souls. The incessant stream of consciousness flowing from Your lotus feet looks like a form of the nectarean Mandakini (celestial Ganges). Please shelter us under Your splendidly sweet lotus feet, and destroy all attachments preventing this.

“O friend of the distressed! We have no desire other than the desire to touch the pollen dust on Your lotus feet. Narada’s curse turned into our greatest boon. Association with *sadhus* who intensely yearn for Your service, therefore, always gives good results. May our words perpetually glorify You. May our minds be forever fixed on Your lotus feet. May our ears be constantly absorbed in hearing Your teachings.

“What more can we say? Now that all our senses are engaged in pleasing You, we can relish the nectar of Your loving service. Narada Muni, that saintly honeybee who always drinks the nectar of Your feet, has released rain clouds of mercy upon us by His apparent curse. You, who display Your attractive pastimes in thousands of universes, have kindly allowed such fallen souls as us to see them.

“O Lord! Who can describe the immense fortune of Your mother who bound You to this mortar? What more can we say? Even Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, Indra, and all the exalted sages in the universe do not possess even a fraction of a grain of the good fortune of mother Yasoda. O omnipotent one! Even the greatest *jnanis*, *vedantists*, and *yogis* cannot understand You. But You quickly avail Yourself to *premi-bhaktas* intent on hearing Your transcendental pastimes as Nandanandana.

“O Lord! We want to become completely attached to Your lotus feet. So we beg You to please reveal within our hearts the right prayer to attain this. Alas! Show us how to live righteously by accepting the results of our good and bad *karma*.”

After speaking thus, the demigods proceeded Northward and disappeared. Then the twin *arjuna* trees crashed to the ground. Their falling made such a terrible sound that it deafened the village ladies as well as the four elephants controlling the four directions of the heavenly planets. All the Vrajavasis felt fearful. The sweet taste of bliss that Vrajesvari Yasoda and the Vrajavasis had previously relished now suddenly disappeared. Becoming bewildered and fearing another calamity, they stopped their duties and rushed to that place.

When they saw the huge fallen trees they thought perhaps Mother Earth offered *dandavats* to Kṛṣṇa-kumara with the arms of these tree trunks. The split open trees looked like the gaping mouth of the lower planetary system. Its two branches appeared like two huge snakes rising up and desiring to go in different directions. The two trees seemed like the dead bodies of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha thrown on the ground by the Lord Himself. When the Vrajavasis found Kṛṣṇa, He appeared calm, fearless, and free from danger. Though only a child, Kṛṣṇa looked like a priceless jewel ornamenting Mother Earth, and assuring Her of protection by His very presence.

At that time the Vrajavasis thought, “O what is this? How have these huge *arjuna* trees suddenly fallen without being pushed down by the wind? In a second they could have crushed and killed Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa just stands peacefully between them looking as fresh as a newly formed rain cloud. It is our good fortune that nothing has happened to Him.

“For a long time these two trees have stood here troubling others. Now due to old age their roots have become rotten, and they toppled over from the weight of their leaves and branches. But upon closer examination, we see this is not the reason because the roots, branches, and leaves are all fresh and hard.” In various ways the Vrajavasis tried to evaluate the situation.

While deeply drinking the pure nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s wonderful pastimes, Nanda Maharaja’s face beamed with transcendental delight. The mind of Kṛṣṇa also danced in jubilation over His recent exploit. Vrajaraja Nanda untied Kṛṣṇa from the mortar and placed Him on his lap. Then the expert and learned Nanda scolded his wife, “Nandarani, You have made a big mistake!” But suddenly Nanda Maharaja remembered Garga Muni’s prophecy that Kṛṣṇa equals Narayana, and that all the scriptures proclaim His transcendental qualities. Thinking thus, Nanda concluded that no one but his son could have done this amazing feat.

The friends of Kṛṣṇa said, “Hey look what Kṛṣṇa has done. Our spotless hero has done something impossible. Afraid of His mother, Kṛṣṇa dragged the mortar over here. Then it got stuck between these two trees and Kṛṣṇa uprooted them.” None of the assembled Vrajavasis believed the words of the innocent children.

Taking auspicious articles such as rice, *arghya*, and *durva* grass, Nanda worshiped Kṛṣṇa, who is the source and bestower of all benedictions and who far surpasses Narayana in good qualities. Afterwards Nanda brought Kṛṣṇa back home to the accompaniment of musicians playing drums and cymbals.

Lunch at Home

One day Kṛṣṇa, Balarama, and the cowherd boys wandered into the forest and started playing. Kṛṣṇa looked as beautiful as a freshly formed rain cloud. They spent many hours in fun sports and games. Desiring to see

Their beautiful forms and pastimes, Yasoda sent Rohini to bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarama back home.

Rohini Devi, a reservoir of unlimited piety and qualities, ran out of the house to perform this task. Seeing the boys from a distance, she called out, “Have you forgotten to come home due to Your absorption in playing? You are perspiring profusely and must be famished from so much playing. Now stop playing and come along with Your enchanting elder brother and friends. Take Your bath, dress properly, and satisfy mother Yasoda by sitting down and eating sumptuously.”

Kṛṣṇa, however, ignored Rohini’s request and kept enjoying with His friends. Feeling frustrated, mother Rohini returned home. Then Yasoda ran to call the boys. “Hey listen Baladeva! King Nanda is starving and will not eat until You return. Now hurry along.”

Yasoda then addressed Kṛṣṇa, “O my darling son! Today is Your birthday so You will be bathed with auspicious articles. You will receive the blessings of the *brahmanas* who are the veritable demigods of this world. Your father has bought opulent clothes for You. Now come home and take Your meal with Your father and all the assembled *brahmanas*.”

Saying this, mother Yasoda, who walks as majestically as a royal elephant, caught Kṛṣṇa’s lotus hand and said, “Come along, let us go home.” Keeping Balarama in front, Yasoda led Kṛṣṇa and the boys back home. Yasoda cannot tolerate that Kṛṣṇa joyfully plays all day without stopping to eat. Like all mothers who dearly love their children, Yasoda stopped Their playing so They could eat Their meal.

Yasoda ordered the maidservants to bring massage oils, bathing powder, clothes, ornaments, and garlands. Taking a soft damp cloth Yasoda cleansed Kṛṣṇa by removing all the dust from His body, which resembled a fully blossomed blue lotus. Yasoda massaged Him with oil, bathed, and dressed Him. After anointing His transcendental body with fragrant oil Yasoda brought Kṛṣṇa before Nanda Maharaja.

Nanda happily picked up his boys, who responded with sweet smiles, and then sat down to take his meal along with Kṛṣṇa and Balarama. Yasoda’s servants also bathed and dressed all of Kṛṣṇa’s friends. After feeding everyone, Yasoda instructed Kṛṣṇa’s playmates before sending them home.

She said, “From now on do not keep playing with my restless son when it is His time to eat. At that time you should stop and quickly return to your homes.” Out of love for His friends Kṛṣṇa walked with them for a short way before bidding them farewell.

Bartering for Fruits

One day a fruit vendor, well versed in moral laws, stood outside Nanda’s gate trying to sell fruits. Hearing her calling for customers, Kṛṣṇa came out to see. The fruit vendor was enchanted by seeing the two pink lotuses of Kṛṣṇa’s feet. In the cup of His small lotus hands Kṛṣṇa brought some food grains to trade for fruits. By the time Kṛṣṇa reached the fruit vendor, however, most of grains had already slipped out of His hands.

The melodious jingling of Kṛṣṇa’s golden ankle-bells captivated the ears of fruit vendor. She absorbed her eyes in the full experience of seeing Kṛṣṇa, the personified stream of bliss who was more enchanting than a beautiful rain cloud. Absorbed in the bliss of Kṛṣṇa’s association, that pious woman filled her palms with fruits and gladly offered them to Kṛṣṇa. At that moment the fruit remaining in her basket magically transformed into costly gems and jewels.

Moving to Vrndavana

One day, Kṛṣṇa personally entered the hearts of the village leaders and inspired them. Upananda, Sananda, and other senior men convened a town meeting to discuss the future of Vrndavana. With warm hearts the people spoke to Vrajaraja Nanda, “O King of Vraja! We cannot understand the extent of your opulence. We have never seen a more fortunate person than you.

“You are the greatest among men. Your son delivers everyone from distress and lamentation. Since the time of His appearance, many seemingly sad and painful things have happened here in Vrndavana. Just after His birth the *raksasi* Putana brought devastation to our village. Then the Sakatasura demon brought us severe distress. Then came that horrible hurricane wind demon Trnavarta who tortured everyone. And the falling *arjuna* trees almost destroyed us.

“We want to know the cause of all these bizarre events. Everyone experienced good fortune with Kṛṣṇa’s birth. And we personally know that your family dynasty is also completely auspicious. So by the accumulation of your good deeds a plenary expansion of the Lord appeared as your very own son.

“We can only guess, therefore, that this place causes these difficulties and not your illustrious son. Considering these facts, we conclude that within the next year we should leave this place and move to the forest of Vṛndavana. Vṛndavana is full of good qualities and always pleasing throughout all seasons of the year. It is replete with luxuriant grasses to please the cows. Not only that, but it is said that for one who attains Vṛndavana, the wealth of the three worlds seems as insignificant as a piece of straw.

“The Goddess of Fortune eternally resides there personally serving all the residents. Govardhana Hill, which always increases the health of the cows, also stands there. O learned one! If you approve this proposal, then please satisfy us by taking us to Vṛndavana.”

Then the King, whose consciousness is totally pure, replied to the *gopas*, “You should understand that I am personally very attached to this Bṛhadvana (Mahavana). But if you find defects here, then for your sake I think we should give up this place and immediately move to Vṛndavana.” This suggestion filled everyone’s heart with joy. In great excitement they ordered their families to prepare the bullock carts for the journey.

The groups of carts, fully loaded with village folk and their paraphernalia, looked very beautiful. Keeping the cows in front, they lined up the carts in preparation to leave. As mature bull elephants can have four tusks, the bullocks had different numbers of teeth depending on their ages. The youngest bullocks had four teeth, whereas the elder bullocks had up to nine. The bullocks had gold plated horns shining like the peaks of Mt. Sumeru. The rounded and nicely shaped jawbones of the bullocks looked attractive. As a music teacher dances with dexterous steps, the bullocks moved gracefully on their splendid hooves.

As there are four parts to a poem, similarly, these bullocks had four legs. Nanda Maharaja had 900,000 white cows in his herd. The restless natures

of the bullocks indicated the depth of their intelligence. Though yoked to the carts, they were not tied through their noses. Attractive necklaces of sweet sounding bells hung from their necks.

Multicolored canopies topped the carts. These canopies had many designs and colors like green, brick red, yellow, white, red and pale yellow. Colorful curtains made of costly jute covered the sides. Flags fluttered above the golden domes atop the carts. The flags looked like wonderfully designed tongues extended to taste the rays of sun. The splendidly decorated carts mocked the flower airplanes of the demigods. Indeed, these bullock carts established a new standard of excellence among conveyances.

Just as there is no fault in being attached to *sadhus*, the carts were faultless in construction and beautiful to behold. As devotees become beautiful by engaging in Kṛṣṇa's service, the *cakras* above the carts looked as beautiful as *cakravāka* birds floating in a lake. As the sons of Kuvera are attached to residing in his capital city of Alakāpurī, similarly, the wooden yokes were attached to the carts. The carts held many gorgeous pots made of gold, silver, brass, bell metal, and copper.

Extending from Bṛhadvana (Mahavana) to Vrndavana, the long line of cows and bullocks looked like a separate branch of the Yamuna River. From a distance it appeared that this long line of moving cows was standing still. The people thought, "Perhaps the Suradhuni Ganga has appeared here to speak privately with the Yamuna. Or maybe the unlimited waves from the milk ocean have come here to take the dust of Vrndavana? Or has Ananta Sesa renounced His service as Narayana's bed to come see Vrndavana? Could we be seeing the expanded hood of the king of the snakes? Or is it a necklace of pearls decorating Mother Earth?"

The long line of carts topped with glittering golden domes and multicolored flags flapping in the wind looked like a vast wall containing many tall golden doors surrounding a city palace. They looked like a small mountain range appearing as the offspring of Mt. Kailasa, Mt. Sumeru, and the Himalayas coming to play with the Yamuna. Taking compassion on this tiny mountain chain, Indra withheld his anger and refrained from cutting off their wings with his thunderbolt.

The furrows left in the earth by the wheels of the carts looked like the walls of a castle rising in the air but having no support. One time mother Bhumi took the form of a cow to beg Kṛṣṇa to remove the distress she felt from the burden of demoniac kings. It seemed that Mother Earth had again appeared in her original form as a cloud of dust. Rising in the sky above the carts she seemed to be reaching for Brahmaloka. In this way people viewed the long line of bullock carts moving toward Vṛndavana.

Many cowherd men simultaneously shouted orders to different people. All the words merged into a mass of indiscernible noise. Except with hand gestures, communication was impossible in the clamor. The combined vibrations of carts, people, drums, and the bellowing of cows silenced all other sounds. At last all those sounds merged quietly within the ethereal element. Learned men proclaim that sound is a by-product of ether.

Boarding their cart, Yasoda and Rohini appeared like two valuable jewels. The cart itself looked like a mountain cave enacting a pastime of displaying its storehouse of costly jewels in the form of these two lovely ladies. Their sons Kṛṣṇa and Balarama shone as the embodiments of benediction for the three worlds. With their all-auspicious sons sitting on their laps the two mothers achieved all perfection, and looked very beautiful at the same time. Yasoda and Rohini simultaneously glorified Kṛṣṇa, but from a distance it seemed they were quarreling.

Hundreds of armed sentinels stood guard around the carts. When the bullock procession left Mahavana it looked like the personified wealth of the capital had suddenly risen to touch the sky. It seemed that the goddess of the city personally lead the way to beautify the journey. All that was left of the capital was the land. At that time the advance party of Nanda Maharaja returned from Vṛndavana to join the procession.

Since such a vast party could not cross the Yamuna before sunset, they decided to camp on the banks of the river. The elderly cowherd men, even without receiving Vrajaraja Nanda's order, erected their tents and prepared for the night. Invisibly, the goddess of the city helped everyone quickly establish his habitat.

Please hear about that splendid city which arose on the bank of the Yamuna. A kaleidoscope of colorful tent canopies covered the ten directions. The

cowherd men expertly erected walls made of cloth to surround that temporary city of tents. As in an ordinary city, they made four pathways bisecting the four directions. They also established footpaths and marketplaces to facilitate the residents.

While sitting under the evening sky chewing their cud, the numerous white cows looked like a collection of soothing moon rays or a small lake of milk. As more and more cows sat amongst them that lake expanded to appear like the ocean of milk. Sananda, Upananda, and other respected relatives met and conversed with Nanda in his tent. Afterwards they went to their own tents.

Meanwhile they unloaded all the necessary items from the carts. After unyoking the bulls, the caretakers fed them and let them take rest. The servants busied themselves buying and selling different products while the kitchen helpers cleaned and prepared for cooking.

After spending twelve hours moving across the sky, the weary sun-god happily met with his wife in the form of the westerly direction. Birds chirped excitedly and soared through the sky before securing themselves in their nests for the night. The peacocks flew up to perch in the treetops. Due to frolicking all day, the deer felt tired and walked lazily along the Yamuna.

Intoxicated honeybees trapped themselves in closing lotus flowers. As a woman conceals herself before running off for a lover's tryst, the presiding *devīs* of the directions covered their faces with the blue veil of darkness. Night blooming red and white lotuses welcomed the evening with blissful smiles. Separated from their lovers, the *cakravāka* birds wailed piteously.

As the day's heat abated and evening approached, no one could clearly distinguish the forms of the men or the cows. Under the dim light of the twinkling stars the shadows of the cows appeared to be fat and short, while those of men looked long and tall. As the starlight increased, the shadows of the humans grew larger and larger. Just as a charitable man distributes his compassion to one and all, the many lamps in the campsite diffused their light in all directions. Posted sentries guarded all the roads. The natural beauty of evening appeared like a goddess eager to serve Sri Kṛṣṇa.

Satisfied by eating their fill and seeing their calves standing nearby, the cows stood peacefully while the cowherd men milked them. The milking of

so many cows produced a tremendous sound that resembled the vibration created at the time of churning the ocean of milk. Kṛṣṇa derived great pleasure from hearing that beautiful, sweet deep sound. While milking the cows the *gopas* loudly called their names, “Hee! Hee! Dhavali! Shavali” and the cows responded by mooing. The men affectionately fondled and caressed the cows as they gathered around them.

After taking their evening meal the Vrajavasis relaxed and happily wandered about the campsite. The sentries showed off their techniques for staying awake through the night. Seeing this, the Vrajavasis felt confident of their expertise, so they returned to their tents for a peaceful rest.

Three hours before sunrise the wives of the *gopas* woke up, bathed, dressed in clean cloth, and performed *vastu-puja*. Then they churned butter while singing many enchanting songs glorifying Kṛṣṇa. The sound of the *gopis*’ jeweled bangles and ankle-bells blended harmoniously with the deep, melodious sound emanating from the large churning pots. That auspicious vibration easily removed all misfortune from the universe. The directions amplified that sound by responding with their echoes. Considering it improper to spend any more time with their husbands, the demigoddesses woke up at once. Then they listened with rapt attention to the sweet sound of the *gopis* churning butter.

As the sun rose everyone prepared to cross the Yamuna River, the daughter of the sun-god. Following Vrajaraja Nanda’s order, the *gopas* called the cows by making the sound “Hee! Hee!” Mooing in response, the cows entered the water. As they swam across the Yamuna, the cows exhaled strong breaths of air. The heavy, water-soaked tails of the cows hung motionless under the water. Keeping their heads and humps above the water, they flowed with the currents and finally reached the Yamuna’s opposite shore.

The horn-less, light-bodied calves felt great happiness as they quickly swam across the river. Crossing from all directions in front of their mothers, the calves reached the opposite shore. The *gopas* carried the new born calves across the Yamuna by hanging them around their necks, and holding their soft legs with their left arms while using their right arms to swim. The mothers of the calves followed behind crying anxiously.

The tall humps on the backs of the mature bulls made waves as they moved through the Yamuna. As if in an angry mood, the bulls turned their necks and butted these successive waves with their horns. A captivating scene manifested there. Despite the strong current, the bulls held their heads high and straight, breathed heavily, and quickly crossed the Yamuna. All the innumerable cows made it safely across the Yamuna. But they appeared exhausted from the journey, so they stood in rows on the Yamuna's sandy banks, which looked as white as transparent camphor dust. The groups of white cows beside the Yamuna looked as attractive as the river Jahnavi.

The boats plying on the water looked like the *nagapatnis* rising up from Patalaloka to playfully extend their jewel-bedecked hoods above the Yamuna. It seemed that from the day the Vrajavasis arrived in Vrndavana, Visvakarma, the architect of the demigods, had made all arrangements to make them happy. The beautiful clear sky looked like a stream of the Ganga meeting the Yamuna. Various aquatics sported within the Yamuna.

Many highly decorated golden boats, exhibiting the epitome of artistic craftsmanship, cruised along the Yamuna. The best among those boats had an ornamental cabin topped with beautiful flags gently flapping in the breeze. Kṛṣṇa and Yasoda, Rohini, and their maidservants boarded that boat. Kṛṣṇa enjoyed watching the rows of small waves in the Yamuna. The wonderful effulgence of Kṛṣṇa's body enhanced the beauty of the Yamuna and made it look like a sparkling gem.

Leaving Yasoda's side, Kṛṣṇa leaned over the edge of the boat. While supporting Himself with His left hand Kṛṣṇa stretched His right hand under the water to touch the bottom of the boat. Anticipating some danger, the two mothers tried unsuccessfully to stop Kṛṣṇa from His frivolous splay. With great concern, Nanda boarded the same boat, quickly picked up Kṛṣṇa, and sat Him on his lap. Undisturbed, the boatman continued rowing steadily across the Yamuna.

The remaining men and their families boarded other boats and happily crossed the river Yamuna. After ferrying all the people, the boatman used boarding platforms to load all the bullock carts and cross the river again. Vrajaraja Nanda satisfied the boatmen with valuable clothes and ornaments.

PART II. Pauganda Lila (age: 3yr 6m – 7yr), Chatikara, Vrndavana, Chapter 7

Chapter Seven: The Killing of Vatsasura, Bakasura, and Aghasura The Bewilderment of Lord Brahma

The Killing of Vatsasura

Upon reaching Vrndavana the cowherd men formed a temporary settlement. Using their hundreds of bullock carts, they made a boundary wall in the shape of a half circle (*chatikara*) extending from Kaliya-daha on the bank of the Kalindi to Govardhana Hill, and North to the region of Nandisvara. At that time, Nanda Maharaja's capital of Nandisvara and all its good qualities had not yet manifested. As fire can merge within fire and water can merge within water, similarly, the transcendental qualities of Nanda's old capital of Mahavana entered into the temporary new capital city at Chatikara.

Since the wealth of these two cities was one in all respects, then how can I separately describe the wealth of Vrndavana? The varieties of exotic birds singing and flying about there increased the enchantment of Vrndavana. Deer and other animals roamed throughout the richly foliated forests. The banks of the Yamuna glistened attractively, and the gorgeous Govardhana Hill added a unique touch of majestic charm. Seeing the natural and abundant beauty of Vrndavana delighted the hearts of all Nanda's followers.

When Vrajaraja Nanda entered his private quarters, Upananda, Sananda, and other respected leaders entered their homes, the cows relaxed in their *goshallas*, and the florists, pan sellers, and merchants went into their shops. The Vrajavasis could not conceive that everything had happened perfectly by the will of the Lord. Beginning with the Pulindas (aborigines), all the people in Vrndavana felt blissful just by performing their usual domestic duties. As the cows enjoyed the plentiful supply of fresh sweet grass, they soon forgot all about the pastures of Mahavana.

Without their knowledge, the Vrajavasis had inherited the storehouse of Kuvera's wealth and the eight jewels of mystic perfection. Concealing His unlimited opulence (*aisvarya*), Kṛṣṇa continued to perform His amazing pastimes in the role of an innocent child. Sometimes due to unavoidable circumstances Kṛṣṇa revealed His hidden opulences.

After living in Chatikara for some time, Kṛṣṇa displayed His pastime of tending cows (*go carana lila*). Although he had many *gopas* to care for his nine *lacs* of cows, the King of Vrndavana had to yield to the repeated requests of his mischievous son. Under the influence of Yogamaya, Nanda Maharaja decided to engage his beloved son Kṛṣṇa in tending the cows.

Nanda and Yasoda forever exist as the unparalleled examples of transcendental parental love. Hearing that her husband considered engaging her tender son in such demanding work, Yasoda protested, "How can you ask your son, who is still on His mother's breast, to accept such a painful engagement?"

Then that wonderfully splendid boy who displays a sweet variety of enchanting pastimes spoke to His mother, "Mother, do not interfere with My cherished desire to tend the cows. I will not listen to your words or consider your feelings regarding this." Impatient due to His childish nature, Kṛṣṇa continued, "Mother please give Me permission. My friends and I will experience great fun tending the cows. Is there anyone in this world who would not enjoy such work?"

Hearing Kṛṣṇa's words, mother Yasoda kept quiet and gave up her attempt to stop Him. Vrajaraja Nanda was surprised by his wife's sudden silence regarding this matter. Then he chose an auspicious day for Kṛṣṇa to take out the cows. That day Balarama and all the cowherd boys met in the *goshalla*. After selecting some calves for Kṛṣṇa, Nanda Maharaja handed Him a red stick for controlling them.

Seeing His mother and father following Him into the forest, Kṛṣṇa asked them to return home. He said, "We are experienced in tending calves. Do not worry about us." His parents said, "Alright, but for today do not wander far with the calves and come home soon." After preventing Nanda and Yasoda from going any further, Kṛṣṇa, Balarama, and the other boys showed their expertise in tending the calves.

Kṛṣṇa's ecstasy grew day by day as He joyfully tended the calves. As Kṛṣṇa wandered about, He covered Vṛndavana with the *syama* blue color of His bodily effulgence, which shone more brilliantly than a cluster of blue lotus flowers. From all directions in the heavens the demigods watching Kṛṣṇa's wonderful pastimes with the calves fell unconscious in boundless joy. Both the celestials and the Vrajavasis enjoyed the fun. The astonishing pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama continually filled Their parents with delight.

Everyday before sunrise the kind-hearted Yasoda, who knows all moral laws and can purify everyone in the three worlds, tenderly woke up Kṛṣṇa. After cleansing His mouth, she rubbed Kṛṣṇa's with fragrant oil, bathed Him, anointed His eyes with *kajala*, smeared His body with sandalwood pulp, dressed Him, and decorated Him with valuable ornaments. Then she happily fed Kṛṣṇa many tasty, nourishing foods.

Yasoda followed behind Kṛṣṇa when He went out with the cows. Brimming with parental love, Yasoda said, "Kṛṣṇa I will go with You to a particular place and then return home." After a short time, however, Kṛṣṇa spoke some considerate words to prevent Yasoda from going any further. A splendid flower garland swung on Kṛṣṇa's chest as He walked with His brother and friends. Everyday they took the calves to a place full of succulent grass. After tasting the fresh green grass the calves would jump around in jubilation. Kṛṣṇa passed His days absorbed in various childhood pastimes with His calves and friends.

Every morning Yasoda prepared delicious food for Kṛṣṇa and sent it out to the forest. That food parcel contained enjoyable items that could be licked, chewed, drunk, and sucked. The preparations were also warm and appealing. Upon receiving it, Kṛṣṇa, Haladhara, and the cowherd boys sat down in a circle and ate the food while laughing and joking. After eating they continued tending the cows. The ankle-bells of Kṛṣṇa filled the forest with captivating sounds, and the touch of His tender lotus feet stimulated the heart of Mother Earth.

In the late afternoon Kṛṣṇa returned from the pastures with the boys and calves. Yasoda, the wife of the crest-jewel of Vṛndavana, eagerly waited to receive her beloved son. Looking toward the forest and listening attentively, she swelled with anticipation over His return. Engaging the household servants in other duties, mother Yasoda personally did the service of

cleansing Kṛṣṇa's face and limbs when He came home. After feeding Him some nourishing foods, she laid Kṛṣṇa to rest on a jewel-inlaid bedstead.

Once upon a time a demoniac follower of Kamsa, a devout worshiper of Durga, disguised himself as a calf to mix with Kṛṣṇa's calves. Just as an open well concealed by tall grass waits to trap an unsuspecting bull elephant, this demon pretended to be a friend, though actually he was a thief. Kṛṣṇa, the crest-jewel of omniscience, immediately recognized the *asura* imposter and said to Balarama, "Hey Douji! Does this calf belong to Vrndavana? Or is it a man disguised as a calf?" The playmates of Kṛṣṇa could not determine the calf's identity.

With His left hand, which resembled a gentle lotus flower, Kṛṣṇa caught the demon by the hind legs, whirled Him overhead like a firebrand, and smashed him to death in the top of a *kapittha* tree. Assuming a huge, grotesque form, the demon immediately died. Kṛṣṇa gave *Brahman* liberation to that demon, who was a former mystic *yogi*. Brahma, Siva, and the other demigods appreciated Kṛṣṇa's effortless act of killing Vatsasura and came to congratulate Him. An expert such as Kṛṣṇa can easily perform impossible tasks; therefore such deeds are not at all astonishing.

Kṛṣṇa, the vanquisher of all demons, looked exceedingly attractive while engaging in His pastimes. The life of the lotus flowers gradually faded away with the diminishing rays of the sun. Seeing the sun slipping behind the dark curtain of the sky, Kṛṣṇa called His calves and returned home. Although the character and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa defy comprehension, they perfectly suit His age and charming personality as the beautiful cowherd boy of Vrndavana.

When the boys and calves approached the edge of town, their respective mothers happily greeted them. Nanda, Yasoda, and the Vrndavana *gopis* received Kṛṣṇa, Balarama, and their own children with an outpouring of love and affection. But the boys resisted when their mothers tried to pick them up and carry them home. The cowherd boys excitedly told Yasoda how Kṛṣṇa sent a big demon to the house of death without even fighting him. As usual upon arriving home, Kṛṣṇa was massaged with oil, bathed, anointed with sandal pulp, and dressed. Then Kṛṣṇa ate His evening meal with His father and retired for a pleasurable rest.

The Killing of Bakasura

As Kṛṣṇa enacted His human-like pastimes, He looked very attractive with a necklace hanging on His chest when He awoke just before sunrise. After taking breakfast Kṛṣṇa met His playmates and prepared to leave for the day. Following the principles of *vaiśya dharma*, Kṛṣṇa and His powerful brother Balarama collected the calves and went out to the forest everyday. They brought the thirsty calves to a reservoir of clear, cool water, and left them on the banks to feed on the fresh sprouts and soft shoots of grass.

At that time Kṛṣṇa, the beautiful, enchanting cowherd boy who performs wonderful pastimes and protects the whole creation, saw an unusual demon in the shape of a gigantic duck. Kamsa had sent this demon to kill Kṛṣṇa. He was known as Bakasura, the demoniac brother of Putana. As a good *tantric* can see the future, Bakasura understood that Kṛṣṇa fit the description of Kamsa's dreaded enemy.

Bakasura immediately opened his ferocious beak in an attempt to swallow the Lord. His lower beak lay on the ground and his upper beak pierced the heavenly planets. It seemed he intended to devour all the living entities on earth and in heaven. Kṛṣṇa's friends felt great anxiety as they beheld that fearful monster.

The playmates of Kṛṣṇa said, "O brother, this creature cannot be a bird because he is about to swallow us all in his deadly mouth. Seeing its aggressive behavior, it must be a demon in the form of a huge duck, so we should quickly run from here. His body is taller than the peak of Mt. Kailasa. It will be very difficult for us to escape from his gaping mouth."

To assure His dearest friends of His protection, Kṛṣṇa glanced at them with a delicate smile that captivated their minds and satisfied their hearts. Kṛṣṇa, the undaunted one who awards fearlessness to everyone in creation, smiled at the boys and moved near the demon. In a second that dreadful duck swallowed Kṛṣṇa. Seeing this seemingly irreversible calamity, Balarama and the boys exclaimed, "Alas! Alas! What a disaster!"

The demigods observing from the sky fell unconscious. As a camel spits out fresh mango leaves immediately after chewing them, or a man experiences a fiery feeling in his sinuses if he takes water up his nose, similarly, that demon felt a burning sensation from swallowing Kṛṣṇa and tried to spit

Him out. The demon suffered immense distress as Kṛṣṇa simultaneously constricted and expanded his throat with a violent force. While rapidly flapping his wings in an attempt to eject Kṛṣṇa from his throat, the demon felt his life airs rushing out of his heart.

Kṛṣṇa escaped from the mouth of the demon just as the moon slips out from the mouth of Rahu, or as the sun escapes from the grip of a dense monsoon cloud. Kṛṣṇa appeared like a lion cub coming out from the mouth of a mountain cave, or a devotee attaining deliverance from the dark well of material existence. Surprisingly, Kṛṣṇa's clothing and ornaments had not become the least bit sullied from passing through the saliva filled throat of that demon. Looking fresh and beautiful, Kṛṣṇa whispered some loving words to awaken His friends who had fallen unconscious on the banks of the Yamuna.

Renewing his deadly attack, Bakasura tried to pinch Kṛṣṇa in his beak. Kṛṣṇa grabbed the demon's beak and split it in half just as easily as a child splits a blade of grass. Rivers of blood flowed in all directions. The two pieces of his dead body looked like twin mountain peaks lying on the ground.

The denizens of the higher planets happily showered flowers from Nandanana (Indra's celestial gardens) upon Bakari (Kṛṣṇa). Celebrating the victory, the Gandharva and Kinnara women danced and cried in jubilation. Their teardrops, which washed away their *kajala* and fell through the sky, appeared like celestial honeybees dancing amidst the flowers falling from heaven. *Dundubhi* drums resounded everywhere proclaiming the triumph. Astonished by this wonderful pastime of Kṛṣṇa, Vaivasvata Manu and many other sages offered prayers.

Witnessing this transcendental feat, Kṛṣṇa's playmates immersed in divine joy. The boys felt that they had regained their lives upon seeing Kṛṣṇa, the lord of their hearts, walking confidently like a royal bull elephant. Being late afternoon, the cowherd boys collected their calves and returned to Vrndavana along with their charming friend. The soft artistically shaped palms of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful hands resembled *kadamba* flowers.

The cowherd boys raced to their homes to tell their parents all about Kṛṣṇa's remarkable pastimes. Though tired and breathing heavily, they tried

their best to explain Kṛṣṇa's exploits. Due to exhaustion their voices choked up, but their mispronounced words sounded very sweet and satisfying to their parents. The pleasure of hearing about Kṛṣṇa's killing Bakasura quickly removed everyone's anxiety.

The young *gopas* said, "Mother, listen to the amazing adventure we had today. You will be surprised to hear how Kṛṣṇa showed His incredible strength. With our own eyes we saw Him easily vanquish a formidable demon. Driven by false ego, Bakasura tried to kill us. His extremely sharp beaks felt as hot as fire. But just using His bare hands, which are softer and cooler than lotus flowers, Kṛṣṇa broke that demon's beaks as easily as a child splits a blade of *vīraṇa* grass. By killing that demon Kṛṣṇa finished all his devious acts."

The sweet talks of the cowherd boys filled their mothers' ears with nectar. At first mother Yasoda felt afraid upon hearing that the demon tried to swallow the boys. As she heard more about Her son's expertise in killing that awesome demon, Yasoda and the other mothers felt slightly relieved and smiled mildly. Yasoda thought to herself, "Alas! Even though I left Mahavan to escape the harassment of demons, they are still attacking my son. My son is very bold and restless. But what can I do and where can I go? By destiny I am confused and cannot understand the plan of Providence."

After bathing and feeding Kṛṣṇa His evening meal, Yasoda, the abode of maternal affection, said, "From now on just stay home. Please do not go out to the forest. We have so many men to do this work, so now You can stop tending the calves. You need not take so much trouble for this."

Kṛṣṇa replied, "But mother, actually all these stories about My heroic exploits are just lies. Do not worry about all these things." Overflowing with love, Yasoda laid Kṛṣṇa down to rest on a valuable bedstead.

Kṛṣṇa's eternal form is that of a fifteen year-old youth. However, His *kumara* and *pauganda lilas* (childhood and boyhood pastimes) also eternally remain within His body. According to His sweet will, Kṛṣṇa manifests one particular pastime form or another. Kṛṣṇa displays these different pastime periods to fulfill the desires of His devotees, who themselves are wish fulfilling creepers. Although the stages of His

childhood, boyhood, and youthful pastimes differ in nature, they do not conflict with each other.

Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of transcendental bliss, maintains His eternal *kaisora-rupa* (form of youth) within Himself. His pastimes, therefore, do not undergo any transformation. In order to nourish His *balya-lila* (childhood pastimes) Kṛṣṇa conceals His six opulences and His form of eternal youth by His own sweet will. This is the explanation of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

Although Kṛṣṇa showed His manifold opulences when He killed Putana, Trnavarta, and other demons, He quickly hid these powers in order to preserve the sweet mellow of *vatsalya-rasa* (parental love). Therefore the influence of Kṛṣṇa's divine majestic powers (*aisvarya*) remain in the background so that He can relish the sweet flavor (*madhurya*) of His Vrndavana pastimes with His intimate loving servants. Within Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body of eternity, knowledge, and bliss the various mellows of parental affection, friendship, and paramour love reach perfection. Why does Kṛṣṇa perform these pastimes? To favor His devotees, who are fixed in the moods of *vatsalya*, *sakhya*, and *madhurya bhavas*, Kṛṣṇa allows Himself to come completely under their control. The various pastime periods of Kṛṣṇa are eternal and beyond judgement and argumentation.

At this time Kṛṣṇa accepted the flute as His dearest musical instrument. He astonished the people of Vrndavana with the incredible artistry and expertise of His flute playing. Commenting on this, the Vrajavasi housewives said, "O dear Kṛṣṇa, Your lips that previously tasted only Your mother's breast milk, now relish the soft notes of Your flute. Which *guru* has taught You to play so sweetly? O darling Kṛṣṇa, if You play Your melodious flute again I will adorn Your face with *tilaka*." In response Kṛṣṇa played exquisitely on His flute to please the hearts of all.

Kṛṣṇa's magnificent dark body glistens like a *tamala* tree. With His bright yellow *dhoti* He looks like a wild elephant cub covered with saffron. A garland of fragrant wild flowers swings over Kṛṣṇa's ankles while He roams and sports from forest to forest just like a baby elephant. Every day Brahma, Siva, Indra and other demigods descend to Vrndavana to have *darsana* of Sri Kṛṣṇa.

One day before sunrise Kṛṣṇa asked Yasoda, “You are the Queen of all the people. O auspicious one, today I want to take My meal in the forest. So please do not turn down My request?”

Nandarani shook her head from side to side while saying, “No, No, No!” Though not wanting to oppose His mother, Kṛṣṇa, who removes all misfortune, took a vow to fulfill His cherished desire and said, “Mother, if you do not allow Me to go, then in the name of God I will go anyway.”

Balarama, who is always happy to serve His brother, blew loudly on His buffalo horn and readied the cows for the journey. Hearing Balarama’s buffalo horn, the cowherd boys left their homes and rushed to meet Kṛṣṇa. Then Kṛṣṇa, the supreme controller of the three worlds, asked Yasoda, “Please make us happy by giving us a variety of foodstuffs?”

Yielding to her son’s request, Yasoda prepared many kinds of fresh items for the boys’ forest picnic. She made superbly thick yogurt that appeared like a vast ocean of cream, and heaps of soft, delicate butter that looked like slices of the moon. The *rubri* appeared like foam on an ocean of *kṣīra*. The chunks of cheese challenged piles of snow. Even the eyes of the demigods bulged joyfully upon seeing the *khoya*. The attractive cakes looked like the orb of the full moon. The pieces of sugar candy looked as beautiful as a heap of hailstones.

Very pure, fragrant, and pleasing yogurt appeared there. The many types of flat rice mixed with milk and aromatic camphor bathed the tongue in nectar and satisfied the mind. The rich creamy sweet rice defeated the nectar of condensed moonshine. The meal also included fragrant lemon and mango pickles, *pāpaḍam*, *namkeen*, *gūjha*, and other types of savories.

The unlimited quantity of foodstuffs competed with Yasoda’s boundless motherly affection. The four types of eatables, which included items to chew, lick, suck, and drink, were expressions of Yasoda’s love and devotion. No one had ever seen such a wide variety of appetizing foods. Being unfamiliar with the unique preparations, which were very rare and not available in the marketplace, no one could properly count them.

Kṛṣṇa joyfully looked upon all those delectable foods and told His associates, “Just give up your pride and carry all these preparations for our forest picnic.” The cowherd boys submissively agreed to bring everything.

Then Kṛṣṇa, whose superexcellent, enchanting beauty puts millions of Cupids into distress, continued, “O friends, the hearts of mental speculators will never melt because they are hard and dry. And if you walk behind the calves the dry and hard foodstuffs that you are carrying will not melt.”

Kṛṣṇa divided the load of edibles equally among his friends. Seeing this, mother Yasoda brought even more food items to distribute. Each boy carried a stick balanced on his shoulder with pots of foodstuffs tied on the ends. After decorating Kṛṣṇa with a garland of fresh forest flowers, Yasoda handed Him His celebrated flute. Due to Yasoda’s deep affection for her beloved son, milk automatically dripped from her breasts and wet her blouse. Yasoda and the other mothers walked a short distance with the thousands of boys moving behind the thousands of calves. Just at that time an astrologer arrived announcing that a *yajna* must be performed to appease the stars and planets. Taking His mother’s permission, Balarama stayed home to attend to the astrologer.

Kṛṣṇa continued to walk along with the calves and cowherd boys. He carried a flute in His tender leaf-like left hand, an elegant stick in His right, and an enchanting buffalo horn tucked in His belt. A peacock feather crown rested upon His splendid curly locks. An attractive *guñja mala* hung from His neck, a pair of earrings dangled from His ears, and sparkling rings adorned His fingers. As Kṛṣṇa ran along with the cowherd boys a *vaijayanti* garland swung gracefully across His chest, graced with a splendid golden line. Actually Kṛṣṇa did not like gem-studded armlets, jeweled bangles, and the other valuable ornaments given by His mother. He preferred to wear the simple, natural decorations produced from Vraja’s forest flowers, leaves, unguents, and mineral powders given by His beloved friends.

The *gopa* boys looked very attractive with the sticks of foodstuffs suspended over their shoulders, and buffalo horns, panpipes, and flutes tucked in their belts. They wore *guñja* berry ear ornaments and peacock feathers in their topknots. Wrapped in yellow cloth, their thin wastes looked very pleasant and handsome. They wore armlets, bangles, earrings, necklaces, waist-belts, ankle-bells, and jewels tied with black strings looking like creepers.

Kṛṣṇa absorbed Himself in sporting with His friends and calves. For a long time, Mother Yasoda curiously watched the boys play and wander behind

the calves. Driving the calves forward, Kṛṣṇa walked behind. As peacocks dance jubilantly upon seeing a monsoon cloud, and lake bound lotuses open to drink the sunrays, Mahadeva, Brahma, Indra and other self-satisfied demigods hid behind the clouds to view the breathtaking pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Brahma was especially enthusiastic to witness the festival of Kṛṣṇa taking out the calves.

Whenever Kṛṣṇa sped ahead to a distant place, the cowherd boys scurried behind shouting excitedly, “I will touch Him first!” “O no you won’t, I will touch Him first!” Upon reaching Kṛṣṇa, they impelled Him to choose the winner. The cheeks and lips of the Lord bathed in the nectar of His broad smile as He responded to His friends, “It does not matter who got here first, because somehow you have come here and met Me.”

While rambling through the forest one boy stole another’s boy’s lunch package and passed it to a third. And when the boy discovered his lunch bag stolen, he tried to retrieve it. But the thief would throw it to another. After stealing someone’s lunch bag they quickly took some food from it and replaced it with their own. The boy who lost his food smiled upon getting it back. Some boys snatched each other’s horns, flutes, or herding sticks. One boy stole a second boy’s *guñja mala*, and then a third boy would steal the *mala* from the second, and then a fourth boy took from the third. Finally, after a short time and a few scuffles all the boys recovered their personal belongings. In this way Kṛṣṇa’s friends enjoyed the festival of stealing.

While the calves grazed in distant places to relish fresh green grasses, the *gopas* leaned their poles against the trees and rested in the shade with Kṛṣṇa. Then for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa they invented various games. Seeing an intoxicated peacock dancing nearby, the boys mimicked its jerky neck movements. Contracting their bodies in funny poses, they attempted to imitate the ducks sitting in the marsh. Some boys played with frogs, and when the frogs jumped in the water, the boys immediately dove in after them. When birds flew overhead, the boys ran after their shadows on the ground trying to follow their exact courses. They scared the monkeys by exactly imitating their facial expressions and pulling their tails. When the monkeys climbed the trees, the boys followed and jumped with them. Some boys sang and danced with exaggerated steps while other boys laughed at their antics.

One boy pretended to be an emperor, and others adopted the roles of his subordinate kings and ministers. A cowherd boy constable caught a boy disguised as a thief while others angrily chided him. One posed as a judge and sentenced that thief. Two boys acting like lambs charged and butted heads while an audience of boys cheered the contest. One boy roared like a tiger to frighten the innocent cowherd boy lambs. Sneaking up from behind, one boy covered the eyes of a friend with his palms and said, “Guess who?”

As lion cubs frolic in a forest, and as intoxicated baby elephants play with their parents, the cowherd boys of Vraja, the personified forms of bliss, joyfully sported with the Supreme Lord appearing amongst them as a simple village boy. Kṛṣṇa, who killed demons while tending the calves, who is inconceivable to peaceful, self-controlled persons, and who is always restless, looked like a dark cloud floating across a moonlit sky as He moved behind the cows. In this way Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys spent their time absorbed in play and merriment.

The Killing of Aghasura

The cowherd boys joked with one another, “O brothers! Let us see who can run the fastest, Kṛṣṇa or us?” Kṛṣṇa kept the lead as they raced a short distance. They stopped abruptly, however, upon noticing a peculiar sight. It was a demon, the younger brother of Putana and Bakasura whom Kṛṣṇa had recently vanquished. Burning with anger and lamentation, the demon had come to Vrndavana to avenge the loss of his relatives.

The nasty, vicious demon assumed the form of a gigantic envious python with a huge mouth extending from the surface of the earth to the heavenly planets. At every moment his hideous body continued to expand. His vast gaping mouth seemed to swallow the whole creation along with all its moving and non-moving living entities. Brahma and all the demigods shook in fright at this embodiment of sin (*agha*), who was appropriately named Aghasura.

Awestruck and bewildered by what they saw, the cowherd boys said, “O look! What is this strange mountain cave? Just examine closely and try to figure it out. Who on earth will not be curious upon seeing this unusual cave? From long neglect, the cave looks like the deep mouth of a huge snake. The twin mountain peaks appear like two rows of teeth. The two

vines dangling in the breeze by the opening of that cave seem to be the frightening forked tongue of a snake.

“The red oxide dust blowing out of the mouth of the cave, indicating a mine of minerals, seems like his fiery, poisonous breath mixed with reddish-gold sparks. Just smelling that smoke, which appears to be the snake’s breath, gives one a severe headache. The vines and creepers surrounding the cave, which look like hands waving us into it, appear like the ugly veins and arteries around the snake’s gaping mouth.

“The two dazzling ruby boulders resting just above the mountain cave appear like the beautiful eyes of the snake waiting to mesmerize anyone who glances at them. The strong wind coming from the cave, which shakes the trees in the forest, resembles the exhalation of a big serpent. The smoky glow of the mountain seems like the discoloration of the snake’s body caused by his poison-filled breath. The large cave looks like the massive mouth of the snake. Who amongst us is not overwhelmed with fear upon seeing this mysterious creature?”

Though disturbed with dread and doubt, the cowherd boys decided to enter the mouth of the cave. One boy said, “O brothers! If it is a demon, Kṛṣṇa will easily kill him and protect us.” All the *gopas* had firm faith in Kṛṣṇa. Gazing at the beautiful smiling face of Kṛṣṇa, they laughed and clapped their hands while walking toward the python.

Seeing that they intended to enter that snake demon, Kṛṣṇa, the prince of Vrndavana, tried to stop His friends by shouting in a sweet voice that spread through the creation. “Hey boys! Stop! Do not go inside. It is not a mountain cave, it is a snake!” But it was too late. They did not hear Kṛṣṇa’s words of warning, because they had already fallen unconscious from inhaling the poisonous vapors within the viper’s throat.

Feeling like He had lost some precious jewels, Kṛṣṇa cried piteously. He only thought how to kill the demon and save His devotees. Then Kṛṣṇa, fully confident in His unlimited abilities, nonchalantly walked into the demon’s mouth. Seeing this, the demigods wailed in anguish, “Alas! Alas!” But Kamsa and other demoniac friends of Aghasura rejoiced by cheering, “Ha! Ha! Ha!” Upon hearing the distressed crying of the demigods, Kṛṣṇa, the master of all mystic *yogis*, decided to finish the *asura*.

The heart of the snake shook in fear of his imminent destruction. Although adept in mystic illusions, the demon's vast intelligence had now become bewildered by his false ego. He tried desperately to close his mouth but he could not. Because of Kṛṣṇa's superior mystic power, the snake lost all control over his movements and just sat with his mouth stuck open. The snake felt Kṛṣṇa to be a hot fiery spark burning his throat. A second later, Kṛṣṇa expanded Himself within the throat of the snake until the demon's body exploded like an over ripe green melon. Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body contains unlimited opulences of beauty and perfect action. His elegance rivals the rising moon and His compassion excels the comfort of soothing moonshine.

After killing that ugly demon Kṛṣṇa revived His friends with the pleasant stream of nectar emanating from His beautiful transcendental form. Then He came out of the demon's mouth with the cowherd boys and calves. As Kṛṣṇa left the mouth of the demon, He appeared like the sun rising from behind a mountain. Wearing an attractive forest garland hanging to His knees, Kṛṣṇa looked as gorgeous as a fresh blue rain cloud. At that time everyone saw the spirit soul of the demon, more brilliant than hundreds of suns and moons, merge in the body of Kṛṣṇa. Who can describe the merciful nature of the Lord? First the demon let Kṛṣṇa enter his belly, and then Kṛṣṇa allowed him to merge within His body.

Appreciating the wonderful glories of the Lord, Brahma, Siva, and other demigods offered prayers which sanctified the world as they echoed through the universe. Various drums such as *bheris* (kettledrums) and *dundubhis*, and other instruments reverberated in all directions. The wives of the Gandharvas and Vidyadharas sang joyously in high-pitched voices. As the wives of the Siddhas beat *mrdangas*, Urvasi and other heavenly nymphs danced ecstatically. The best of the Kinnaras sang sweet melodies. Becoming deaf to all other vibrations, the celestial denizens submerged in the sound waves of that ocean of jubilation. Intoxicated with bliss, they showered flowers from Nanda-kanana on Kṛṣṇa. What more can be said?

The beat of Siva's *damru* drum predominated everywhere. In great euphoria, Lord Siva danced so wildly that he cracked the pot-like covering of the universe. As he danced, the crescent moon on his head poured a stream of nectar. When that nectar touched the skulls on Siva's necklace,

the skulls assumed bodies and danced joyfully with great skill. Astonished by this scene, the demigods exploded with uproarious laughter.

The cowherd boys appeared like they had just left the jaws of death. They felt completely relieved and happy to see the tender lotus face of the peaceful prince of Vraja, which looked more attractive than the rising sun. The transcendental deeds of the Lord completely eclipsed the glories of the sun. One after another the boys embraced Kṛṣṇa while talking excitedly.

One boy said, “O Kṛṣṇa! While we played that terrible demon devoured us, and knocked us out with a burning poison. How did You bring us back to life?” Kṛṣṇa replied, “I am the perfect antidote to neutralize poison and also kill the poison giver. If a man smells this medicine, he will become joyful and relish it like the taste of honey. Even the dead will come back to life and enjoy sweet *rasa* if they smell this medicine.”

Kṛṣṇa’s witty remarks increased the cowherd boys’ loving friendship for Him. Then the cowherd boys, the Lord’s eternal associates, enthusiastically embraced each other. Swelling with pride for his beloved friend, one boy said, “I told you before that Kṛṣṇa would finish this demon, just as He had previously killed Bakasura.”

Brahma Bewildered

After saving the boys and calves from the mouth of Aghasura, death personified, Kṛṣṇa, who is full of transcendental qualities, ordered His fortunate companions to gather the calves that had strayed away like meandering deer and follow Him back to Vrndavana. Kṛṣṇa displayed intense love and affection toward His friends by tending calves and playing with them. To bestow His mercy upon the world Kṛṣṇa performed many captivating pastimes in the mood of an ordinary boy.

The cowherd boys carried bundles of delicious food items, which their mothers had prepared in the morning, tied on sticks that rested on their shoulders. On the way home Kṛṣṇa noticed an ideal spot for a forest picnic just beside the Yamuna. “Look, my friends,” said Kṛṣṇa, “The birds are not flying here. It is a nice quiet place, pleasing to the eyes, and as comfortable as the lap of a mother. There are no footprints on the bank. Therefore it is a perfect picnic site. Let the calves graze nearby while we honor *prasada*.”

After hearing the statement of Kṛṣṇa, who is the supreme transcendence and a marvelous person at the same time, the cowherd boys said, “You and I are the same. Since we feel hungry, You must also. So let us take *prasada*.” Kṛṣṇa agreed, “Yes! What a splendid idea! Let us sit here and take *prasada*.”

A circle of tall green trees whose branches joined overhead to form a natural canopy shaded the picnic spot. The earth, as pure and white as powdered camphor, looked as though it had been washed with liquid silver. A gentle breeze, filled with droplets of water scented with the sweet smell of blossoming lotuses, cooled and refreshed the entire area. That peaceful wind felt soothing to the touch, and created a pleasing atmosphere along the bank of the Yamuna.

With His golden effulgence, attractive bluish complexion, and elegant yellow dress, Kṛṣṇa looked like the whorl of a lotus surrounded by a thousand petals as He sat in the center, encircled by lines of cowherd boys. Kṛṣṇa’s intimate friends sat nearest Him. They appeared like rays of the sun sitting in rows around the Lord. The innermost rays glowed with a reddish hue. As the rays moved further from the center they displayed a gradation of colors from orange to yellow, green, blue and violet. This rainbow-like display of colors looked attractive. Although the boys sat at different distances from the Lord, they each felt that Kṛṣṇa was looking directly at them when He glanced their way. This pastime confirms the words of the learned sages who claim that everywhere are the Lord’s eyes and faces as well as His arms and legs.

At that time Kṛṣṇa said, “O My friends! Now please take all the foodstuffs off your carrying poles.” Their full *tiffins* emitted brilliant effulgences in all directions. The cowherd boys placed their *prasada* on flowers or leaves, on rocks, the bark of trees, or on their *caddars*. Some held the *prasada* in the auspicious lines of their palms, and a few put it on their strongly built thighs. Other boys artistically arrayed their best *prasada* on leaf plates and affectionately offered it to Kṛṣṇa.

As Kṛṣṇa ate, He spoke sweet words that washed over His lips like a stream of nectar. Moving His hands in expressive *mudras*, Kṛṣṇa took great pleasure entertaining the boys with witty words. They responded by telling funny jokes that filled Kṛṣṇa with laughter. The blissful smiles on the lotus

faces of the cowherd boys revealed the happiness of their hearts. Kṛṣṇa's warm personal dealings increased the affection felt by His boyfriends. The whole scene appeared breathtaking.

With a flute tucked tightly in His waist on the right side and a buffalo horn and cow-driving stick tucked on His left side, Kṛṣṇa's thin, perfectly shaped waist attracted the minds of everyone. Kṛṣṇa ate some pickles with His right hand while holding a nice preparation of yogurt and rice in His left palm. With His hands moistened by these different foods Kṛṣṇa looked magnificently beautiful. Brahma, Siva, Indra and other denizens of heaven marveled at the extraordinary sight of Kṛṣṇa eating with His friends in the forest.

Due to his false ego, Brahma thought himself the supreme creator. But witnessing the awesome power of Kṛṣṇa in killing Aghasura astounded him. He thought, "Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller of everything. Nevertheless, let me test His actual position." As one becomes a laughing stock by trying to measure the ocean with a yardstick, or measuring the sky with a hand span, similarly, Brahma became a laughing stock by his foolish attempt to fathom the unlimited transcendental power of Kṛṣṇa by purloining His calves. Although similarities exist between Kṛṣṇa and Brahma, or between a glowworm and the sun, the differences are vast. Both Brahma and Kṛṣṇa have illusory energy, but Kṛṣṇa alone enchants Brahma and the entire creation.

The *gopas* forgot all about the calves as they happily took *prasada* with Kṛṣṇa. It appeared as if the *gopas*' lips bathed in the radiance of their teeth as they joked and laughed. During this time Brahma stealthily stole their calves. After some time when the cowherd boys looked for the calves they could not find them. Feeling sad and helpless, they appealed to Kṛṣṇa, who is greater than Lord Siva.

"O beloved friend! We cannot find any of our calves. It seems they have wandered far away being greedy to eat fresh grass. Let us enter the forest and search for them." While listening, Kṛṣṇa's face looked more charming than a splendid full moon. Smiling compassionately, Kṛṣṇa spoke to mitigate their fear, "My dear friends, do not stop eating. Just stay here. I shall personally find the calves and bring them to you."

Kṛṣṇa put down His food and went to collect the calves. He looked very attractive walking along with His flute, stick, and buffalo horn tucked in His *dhoti*. The wonderful effulgence of His body illuminated the entire forest. Although the area abounded with fresh grass, Kṛṣṇa did not find hoof prints or any other sign of the calves even after searching in all directions.

Much to His surprise, when Kṛṣṇa returned to the banks of the Yamuna He could not find any of His cowherd boyfriends. Though temporarily exhibiting a touch of bewilderment, Kṛṣṇa displayed His omniscience by concluding that Brahma, the supreme creator of the material world, had succumbed to His illusory potency and stolen both the calves and His boyfriends. The all-knowing Lord then employed His spiritual energy to expand Himself into the exact forms of each one of the missing calves and boys. Kṛṣṇa miraculously appeared with all of their attributes including their individual moods, mannerisms, dress, ornaments, and carrying sticks. Then playing His sweet flute Kṛṣṇa gladly proceeded home to Vṛndavana.

The Supreme Lord directly creates everything in this universe. He is the only cause and effect of all actions in this world. Nonetheless, the material world is full of Kṛṣṇa's variegated transcendental pastimes. Because the Supreme Lord is unique, wonderful, and inconceivable, the universe displays the same qualities.

As usual, the cowherd boys (now expansions of Kṛṣṇa) danced gleefully to the captivating sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. Their frolicking steps enriched Mother Earth with the quality of bliss. Whistling on their panpipes, they called their beloved calves and returned to Vṛndavana. When they arrived home their mothers showered the same affection on them that they had previously shown to Kṛṣṇa. Overflowing with parental love, each mother felt unlimited joy upon seeing her son, who was none other than Kṛṣṇa. Previously, the Vrajavasis had more affection for Kṛṣṇa than for their own children. But now for one year they displayed ever-increasing affection toward their sons, the expanded forms of Kṛṣṇa.

The cowherd boy expansions of Subala, Sridama, and others pleased their mothers with their usual activities of bathing, eating, and dressing. Unlike other days, however, on that day the boys did not describe the pastimes they had enjoyed with Kṛṣṇa. The calves ran to their respective mothers who affectionately licked their bodies again and again merging in an unlimited

ocean of bliss. Overwhelmed with parental love, the cows bellowed with deep loving voices and then slept with their calves.

When Kṛṣṇa returned home Nanda picked Him up, embraced Him, and placed Him on his lap. Nanda feared that his beard might scratch Kṛṣṇa's delicate face, which is softer than a lotus. Lifting up Kṛṣṇa's turban, Nanda Maharaja smelled His head and then affectionately kissed Him. Although enjoying the highest pleasure just by smelling his son's head, Nanda cried when Kṛṣṇa jumped off his lap to run to mother Yasoda, the perfect form of parental love. Yasoda lovingly fondled her son, massaged Him with fragrant oil, and bathed Him to remove the dust from grazing the calves. Then she dressed Kṛṣṇa in fresh clothing and fed Him sumptuously. After satisfying her invincible son, who is the embodiment of eternity, Yasoda put Him to rest on a comfortable bed covered with a mattress as white as the foam of milk.

At sunrise the next day, Yasoda and the other mothers prepared their sons for going to the forest by carefully decorating them with different ornaments. After taking breakfast all the boys met Kṛṣṇa in the courtyard of His house. Since He could not proceed to the forest without first pleasing His parents, Kṛṣṇa allowed Nanda and Yasoda to caress Him to their heart's content. Even then they insisted on accompanying Him to the edge of the forest. Collecting all His intimate friends and their calves, His own expansions, Kṛṣṇa walked toward the forest.

Kṛṣṇa took the cowherd boys and the calves to pasture near Govardhana Hill. When the cows that were already grazing on Govardhana Hill saw Kṛṣṇa, they ran down the hill so fast that they appeared to be flying. Leaving their own calves and newborns behind, the cows displayed intense parental love toward Kṛṣṇa and the calves accompanying Him. In reality, Kṛṣṇa had expanded as all these calves.

Though trying, the cowherd men could not stop the cows with their sticks. Impelled by strong motherly affection, the cows mooed lovingly while smelling and licking these calves. They neither moved nor eat any grass. On the other hand, the boys could not restrain their calves. Neither the boys nor the cowherd men could separate the cows from those calves.

The cowherd men felt pain in their legs from running after the calves. Upon seeing their sons, however, the expanded forms of Kṛṣṇa, they forgot all pains and immersed in an ocean of parental love. The cowherd men felt supremely blissful from embracing their tender sons, smelling their heads, and kissing them. Placing them on their laps, they cried affectionately out of great joy. Their chests drenched from the tears pouring from their eyes. Then with great difficulty and reluctance they gradually stopped embracing their sons and allowed them to return to Kṛṣṇa.

Balarama, although happy to see the intense love shared between the cows and calves, felt doubtful about it since the calves had already grown up and stopped sucking milk from their mothers. He pondered, “Aha! How astonishing! My affection and that of all the Vrajavasis toward these boys and calves is increasing as never before. It perfectly resembles the love we all feel for Kṛṣṇa, the Supersoul of every living entity. This must be a display of the Lord’s inconceivable energy (*acintya-sakti*). Otherwise, how could I, the elder brother of that unborn Lord who wields the disc that destroys the illusory energy, become bewildered by some mystical display of *maya*? Therefore I will inquire from that crest-jewel of all mystics.”

Balarama said, “Kṛṣṇa, I am amazed! I have faith that You possess superior intelligence beyond My comprehension. Now I can see that You alone have manifested Yourself in the different forms of these calves and boys. They are none other than expansions of Your personal energy as four-armed Narayana forms. Please tell Me why You have done this?”

Honoring Balarama’s request, Yasodanandana satisfied Him by describing the pastime from beginning to end. No one can count the unlimited waves of Kṛṣṇa’s blissful pastimes.

After waiting a moment (in his celestial time standard) Brahma returned to Vrndavana. He was totally astonished to see Kṛṣṇa playing with the boys and calves just as before, even though a complete year had passed by earthly calculation. Greatly bewildered, Brahma thought, “Are these the same calves I stole? Or have some other calves appeared in their place? Actually it appears the calves that I stole are all illusory, and that these are the real calves.”

Brahma's pride being crushed; he chastised himself for attempting to show off his paltry power before the unlimited potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who mystifies the whole universe. Rather than bewildering the Lord, Brahma perplexed himself with his mystic force. This offensive act filled Lord Brahma with great remorse.

As Brahma gazed at the boys, he saw them as four-handed Visnu forms fully decorated with priceless ornaments, and holding the four symbols of the Lord (conch, lotus, club, disc). These forms embodied unlimited bliss and knowledge, and their combined effulgences surpassed the light of millions of suns and moons. Their bodily hairs stood erect in ecstasy, and the perspiration coming from their bodies resembled the globe-like universes rising from the pores of Lord Visnu.

All these Visnu forms of bluish hue wore yellow silken garments that glowed like lightning. They were bedecked with jeweled earrings, crowns, necklaces, armlets, and glittering golden bangles that jingled sweetly. Swarms of buzzing bees hovered above the fresh, tender *tulasi* garlands that hung to their thighs. The tiny tinkling bells suspended from their golden belts emitted delicate enticing sounds.

Then Brahma saw that space, the time factor, the three modes of material nature, the five elements, the seasons, the eight mystic perfections, the nine planets, the ten directions, the presiding deities of the senses, the fourteen Manus, and all the other aspects of material creation had been subjugated by the potency of the Lord. They had taken personal forms to worship the Lord. Those Visnu forms, whose transcendental bodies shone with beauty and opulence, blessed everyone with their compassionate sidelong glances.

One can perceive this truth only by the mercy of the Lord. Understanding Brahma's bewilderment, Kṛṣṇa at once removed the curtain of His Yogamaya. Then Brahma realized that Vasudeva is everything. And he immediately saw Vasudeva, the Absolute Truth, standing before him in Vṛndavana as Kṛṣṇa. With a stick, flute, and buffalo horn tucked in the sash around His waist, and a lump of rice and yogurt in His hand, the Absolute Truth, Sri Kṛṣṇa, was searching everywhere for the calves and His cowherd friends. The transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa acts as a *rasayana* (life giving tonic) to all His friends.

After seeing this, Brahma hastily got down from his swan carrier and fell down before the Lord like a golden stick. He touched the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa with the tips of his four crowns, which appeared like the four golden peaks of Mt. Sumeru. The effulgence of the costly jewels on these crowns seemed to be running out to touch the lotus feet of the Lord. The unlimited radiance of Kṛṣṇa's toe rings, however, neutralized that effulgence. Merely by the touch of Kṛṣṇa's splendid toenails, the effulgence of Brahma attained perfection. Offering his obeisances, Brahma bathed the feet of Kṛṣṇa with his tears of joy.

Kṛṣṇa responded by exhibiting an extremely grave mood. As the puppet master of this entire pastime, Kṛṣṇa moved everyone and everything according to His own desire. He enacted the drama to show the whole universe a wonderful display of His transcendental energy. Realizing the severity of his offense, Brahma offered obeisances again and again at the lotus feet of the Lord. Then Brahma, his head bent low and his body trembling, very humbly glorified Kṛṣṇa with faltering words.

“O son of Vrajaraja Nanda! All glories to You! Your enchanting *guñja* necklace shines brighter than the moon. A splendid forest garland swings on Your transcendental body. Equipped with a herding stick, buffalo horn, and a flute tucked in Your belt, You stand beautifully with a morsel of food in Your hands. I glorify Your wonderful transcendental body that is the source of consciousness.

“O Lord! You have displayed a unique manifestation of thousands of boys and calves just to bestow mercy upon me. All these Visnu expansions are but transformations of Your inconceivable energy. I cannot begin to perceive or properly praise Your majestic opulences. O cause of all causes! All these boys and calves now have four-hands holding conch, disc, mace, and lotus. They are embodiments of bliss, knowledge, and all opulences.

“O unconquerable one! Although You stand before me in Your beautiful two-armed form as a cowherd boy, Your transcendental nature remains unchanged by this transformation. One who gives up the loving service of Your lotus feet, which bestow unlimited bliss and enlightenment, and tries to enjoy material life derives nothing but the hard labor of the endeavor. It is just like the foolish attempt to gain rice grains by beating the empty husk of rice paddy.

“O unconquerable one! You are completely independent, yet You are overcome by the ocean of Your own compassion. Therefore, to benefit the conditioned souls, You exhibit an unlimited reservoir of sweet transcendental pastimes. In ancient times there lived some intelligent *paramahamsas*, the true ornaments among learned scholars. They expressed their genuine love for You by glorifying Your nectarean qualities and remembering Your lotus feet. Thus they attained eternal residence in Your blissful abode.

“Ordinary *mahatmas* cannot fathom Your magnificence. One can realize Your true glories only by rendering pure devotional service. But one cannot understand You just by cultivating scriptural knowledge. O supreme controller! You are an ocean of transcendental qualities. You have descended on earth to benefit everyone. If one could possibly count all the atoms in the earth, the stars in the sky, or the particles of snow, still he could not even know a single quality of Yours.

“One who earnestly waits for You to bestow Your causeless mercy upon him, while patiently suffering the reactions of his past *karma* and always serving You with his body, mind, and heart, will definitely inherit Your inexhaustible abode. My disrespectful dealings toward You and Your friends are reprehensible. You are the supreme controller and the foremost of all mystics.

“My Lord, just see my impudence! To test Your power I tried to extend my illusory potency to cover You. But my potency covered and bewildered me instead. What am I compared to You? I am just like a small spark in the presence of a great fire. O ocean of mercy! I am the predominating deity of the mode of passion. Due to false ego, I became proud and blind to the truth. My mind is full of evil. But please consider that I too am Your servant and therefore worthy of Your compassion.

“Unlimited universes pass through the pores of the body of Maha-Visnu, who is but one of Your expansions. Although I am in charge of this one apparently gigantic universe, what is the value of my lordship compared to Your inconceivable power? Does a mother take offense when the child in her womb playfully kicks her? Similarly, You will not take offense with my misbehavior, since everything that exists is within You.

“O supreme controller! When You lie on the causal ocean a lotus flower grows from Your navel, and I take birth from that lotus flower. Therefore You are my father. Even if a son is disobedient and misbehaves, still the benevolent father never shuns him. O Lord, You are the Supersoul of all embodied beings. Taking the name Narayana, You are the resting-place of all living entities. You embody unlimited patience and remain undisturbed in all situations.

“O Lord! Not by the force of law, but by Your will You lie in the water. You are free from all contamination and the shelter of all truths. Why did You suddenly reveal Yourself when I could not see You clearly within my heart? O Lord, if Your body belongs to the material creation, then how could the whole creation fit within Your belly? Externally this material world seems to be false, but it appears very real when it is within Your belly.

“Since Your body is made completely of consciousness, how could You be touched by matter? O ocean of mercy! Though considered illusory, the material world is also actually real but temporary. You have created it as a reflection of the spiritual world which is real and eternally existent. No one can understand the mysterious action of Your spiritual energy.

“As direct expansions of You, all the calves and cowherd boys manifest eternal forms of bliss and knowledge. Even though these particular cowherd boys never existed before, it does not mean that they are illusory. If one accepts them as material, then he cannot comprehend their transcendental origin. A self-realized person exists beyond the limits of material illusion.

“O! Today I have seen a display of Your inconceivable potencies and matchless opulences. As the supreme mystic You enchant everyone in the three worlds. You are the embodiment of bliss and knowledge, and Your various forms are also made of eternity, bliss, and knowledge. Your appearance in the material world cannot be compared with the birth of ordinary living entities. Your transcendental birth distinguishes You from any ordinary mystic *yogi*.

“You stood alone in the beginning of this pastime. Then by Your own potency You expanded into the forms of Your many calves and boyfriends. These forms were all four-armed and transcendental. Despite this mystical

display of Your unlimited opulence, You remained the same. Such are Your playful transcendental pastimes.

“O Lord! For those who cannot comprehend Your personal pastimes, You present Yourself as the Supersoul within their hearts. You are famous as the creator, maintainer and destroyer. O supreme controller! All these are manifestations of Your unlimited potencies. O omnipotent one! You appear among the sages, demigods, and humans to benefit the pious and punish the miscreants. Your incarnations are completely transcendental and free from the contamination of the illusory energy. Although Your body resembles that of an ordinary human within this material world, it is completely transcendental. Your face, hands, and legs are made of eternity, bliss, and knowledge.

“My Lord! You are the highest truth and the energetic source of all potencies. You possess all conceivable opulences, and are the crest-jewel in the crowns of the universal controllers. Without any effort You can easily stop destined events or make the impossible possible. Your glories, therefore, are far beyond the ability of an insignificant person like me to describe. O Lord, You are the source of unlimited forms and incarnations. You are the greatest among self-realized *yogis*. Neither Lord Siva nor I could ever possibly imitate Your astonishing pastimes. There is no one in this universe that can understand even a fraction of Your unique transcendental nature.

“O supreme controller! This temporary illusory universe differs from Vaikuntha, Your spiritual realm, because it gives distress to everyone without exception. Since You are the personification of eternity, bliss, and knowledge, whenever You appear in this world You manifest the joy of Vaikuntha. You are one without a second, the epitome of pleasure, and the embodiment of spiritual knowledge. You perfectly enact blissful playful pastimes. You are an ocean of unlimited compassion for conditioned souls. If one is favored by even a sidelong glance of Your mercy, he can understand the greatness of Your personality.

“O Lord! Your effulgent transcendental body is full of spiritual bliss and free from all material contamination. Who can match Your boundless qualities? As an intoxicated bee becomes absorbed in drinking the nectar of a flower, similarly, the mind of a person who has received the mercy of a

ṣad-guru becomes absorbed in tasting the nectar of Your service. Indeed, such a wise and fortunate person is very rare in this world. Only Your devotees, whose consciousness has become pure by serving Your merciful lotus feet, can perceive the mysteries of Your transcendental pastimes. Without rendering loving service unto You, even one who knows all the *Vedas* will fail to understand You. Ah! Even the personified *Vedas* could not attain the dust of Your lotus feet!

“Anyone born in Vrndavana is the most fortunate of men. Also blessed are those who contact the pollen from the lotus feet of Your eternal associates. Afterall, Your family, beloved friends, character, opulences, and holy *dhama* of Vrndavana are nothing but expansions of Your very self. Therefore, my dear Lord! Please allow me to take birth as a bird, beast, human being, or even as a creeper in Vrndavana. I desire such a position because You derive great pleasure from the service rendered by all these creatures such as the cows, bulls, birds, and parrots. By taking any type of birth in Vrndavana I will give up my false ego, and attain the opportunity to serve Your lotus feet which are the storehouse of unlimited treasures.

“The Vrajavasis are the most glorious of all living entities. They have attained the summit of all pious activities. Although You are the shelter of everything in creation, You take shelter of the residents of Vrndavana. Although You are the matchless, omnipotent Absolute Truth, You make friends with the Vrajavasis and live amongst them as their greatest treasure. What could be more amazing than this?

“O Lord of creation! You expanded Yourself as thousands of calves to drink the milk of Vraja’s cows. Who can estimate the limits of the good fortune of these pious cows? Lord Siva, myself, and the other presiding deities of the eleven senses utilize the senses of the Vrajavasis as the cups through which we repeatedly drink the intoxicating beverage of the honey nectar of Your lotus feet. By this divine connection we have also become fortunate. However, the good fortune enjoyed by the Vrajavasis who directly and intimately serve You is beyond description.

“Dressing attractively like Your mother, Putana smeared deadly poison on her breast and came to kill You. Yet You mercifully promoted her to the spiritual world. How can You possibly repay the Vrajavasis who have given You everything they have? Just thinking about this bewilders my mind. O

Lord! Until one surrenders to Your lotus feet, he will remain in a fallen condition imprisoned by the contamination of lust, anger, greed, envy, illusion, and madness. O dearest of everyone! Without a doubt, only pious and intelligent persons can know Your inconceivable qualities. Definitely Your glories are beyond the comprehension of my body, mind, and words.

“O friend of the fallen! Please allow me to resume the post of Brahma that You have given, and let me return to my abode named Satyaloka. You know the desires of all the living entities in creation. Therefore since I am residing in this world, You also know my desire. Unlike a mundane person, You never forget anything, and You are the embodiment of bliss and knowledge. O Lord! I offer my obeisances at Your lotus feet.”

Having thus offered his prayers, Brahma circumambulated Lord Kṛṣṇa and returned to Satyaloka. Cakradhara (Kṛṣṇa, holder of the disc) rejoined the calves that sat peacefully munching on fresh grass. Rotating His stick above His head, Kṛṣṇa signaled to the calves to go back home. The calves ran so quickly that the half-eaten grass fell out of their mouths onto the ground. After bewildering Lord Brahma, the Supreme Brahman, in the form of a human being, took the calves, which were still sitting where they were a year earlier, and brought them to the riverbank, where He had previously enjoyed a picnic with His boyfriends. *Yogis* who perceive this pastime laugh in transcendental bliss.

As soon as the cowherd boys saw Kṛṣṇa, the peerless jewel, they no longer felt the distress of separation in their minds. Although the boys had passed an entire year apart from the Lord of their lives, due to the covering of Kṛṣṇa’s illusory potency, they felt the year to be half a moment.

The cowherd boys said to Kṛṣṇa, “O brother! You have quickly returned after defeating the soldiers of the enemy. We have not eaten even one morsel of food in Your absence.” Illuminated by their bright smiles, the faces of the boys looked very sweet and beautiful. Then the cowherd boys surrounded their beloved friend Kṛṣṇa, the remover of all fear.

The cowherd boys continued, “Please take Your meal without distraction.” The loving friendship they shared with Kṛṣṇa freed the boys from all types of agony and distress. Seeing their happy faces, Kṛṣṇa felt unlimited joy

within His heart. After relishing this wonderful exchange of transcendental love, Kṛṣṇa decided to conclude the joyful picnic and return home.

Kṛṣṇa tried to cheer up the boys in order to alleviate the fatigue they felt in their arms and legs from playing so many games. To get relief from the scorching sunshine Kṛṣṇa and His friends put on refreshing flower garlands and laid down under the shade of a big tree. Using the thigh of one boy for a pillow, Kṛṣṇa rested briefly.

Above their heads the sun rushed across the courtyard of the sky to enter his house and meet his loving wife, the western direction. To reduce the fiery pain of separation he felt from his wife during the day, the sun radiated blistering heat waves on the people of earth. Seeing the sun disappearing with his wife, the lotus flowers lost their luster and felt unhappy. As the rays of the setting sun reflected across the ocean of the sky, Kṛṣṇa decided to bring the calves back home to Vṛndavana.

When the cowherd boys blew on their flutes and buffalo horns to call the calves the vibration echoed in all directions. Feeling empty and unhappy, the cowherd boys reluctantly left the forest to return home when they saw rain clouds racing across the evening sky. Taking pleasure in associating with the lord of their heart, the boys gathered all the calves and quickly walked home.

Noticing the remains of the huge body of the dead serpent Aghasura, the cowherd boys thought of using it as a cave for future pastimes. Soon they reached the edge of the village. Eager to drink their mothers' milk, the calves extended their front legs and tried to run quickly. But since their affectionate Lord Kṛṣṇa moved behind them, their rear legs refused to cooperate with the front ones, and thus they could not run very fast.

As Kṛṣṇa approached Vṛndavana a flow of nectar poured from His lotus lips as He played sweetly on His flute. The ears of the Vrajavasis bathed in spiritual bliss by drinking that ambrosia. They felt the ultimate joy in seeing His lovely form. Beholding the beauty of Kṛṣṇa brought life back to their bodies that had died in His separation. Due to intense affection the hearts of Nanda and Yasoda melted in ecstasy. Allured by the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, they hurried to the town gate to greet Him.

Although Kṛṣṇa, the universal *guru* and the vanquisher of demons, had killed the demon Aghasura one year earlier, the cowherd boys thought that on that very day Kṛṣṇa had killed the demon. The mothers of the boys greeted them happily and beautified them by cleansing the dust from their bodies. With excitement and animation the cowherd boys told the wonderful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

They said, “Mother, Kṛṣṇa is the crest jewel of all magicians. We personally saw His astounding activities. Our hearts filled with joy as we watched Him perform impossible feats. Once Kṛṣṇa came and saved us when we were trapped in a devastating fire that burned us like poison.” The cowherd boys of Vrndavana felt the passage of a year to be but a moment. They explained the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in great detail.

Pointing with his right index finger, Vrajaraja Nanda ordered his royal attendants to serve Kṛṣṇa. After bathing Him, they fed Him food and drinks. The learned Kṛṣṇa, of reddish eyes and charming character, found relief in their tender care. His body excelled the softness of a *śirīṣa* flower and the coolness of camphor. After mother Yasoda tenderly fondled her beloved son, Nanda asked Kṛṣṇa to take rest.

Nanda Maharaja said, “Yasoda, as a wealthy man keeps his clothes and servants in separate rooms, now I think we should make a separate room for Kṛṣṇa to sleep in.”

Smiling slightly, Yasoda replied, “But it seems that only a few days have passed since His birth. Even now He can hardly protect Himself. I cannot live a moment without having Him sit on my lap.”

Understanding her heart, Nanda Maharaja replied with gentle words, “O Yasoda, your memory is not very good. From the moment of His birth you have enjoyed the wealth of His pastimes. On one side we are very wealthy.” By not replying Yasoda communicated her approval. Nanda felt elated to see her response, so the next day he built special quarters for Kṛṣṇa.

Despite unlimited personal efforts one cannot understand the transcendental pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Even though he outwits the best of *yogis*, Lord Brahma became totally bewildered by this tiny boy. During this time Kṛṣṇa killed a variety of demons like Vatsasura, Bakasura, and Aghasura. Kṛṣṇa also bewildered Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe, while enjoying a

picnic on the bank of Yamuna. Thus ends the description of the *kaumara lila* of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa.

PART III. Kaisora Lila (age: 7 yr – 10 yr 6m), Nandagrama, Chapters 8-22

Chapter Eight: The Purva-raga of the Gopis

As Kṛṣṇa entered His *pauganda* period (six to ten years old) He looked exceedingly attractive with His sweet nectarean smile, puffy raised cheeks, and the natural fragrance of His body. At this time Kṛṣṇa and Balarama no longer played in the dust of Vrndavana, nor did They play with the honeybees that always buzz in the lotus flowers. For mother Bhumi, the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet gave the perfection of happiness. At six years of age Kṛṣṇa and the *gopas*, the abodes of purity and good qualities, stopped caring for the calves and tended the cows instead.

Now Kṛṣṇa rarely acted restlessly and frivolously as He did during His *kaumara* period. As a student of the *Vedas* becomes sober and serious, Kṛṣṇa turned thoughtful and grave in His movements. His waist reduced to slender proportions and His eyes shone with a glimmer of excitement. He cast anxious glances in all directions. Where did Kṛṣṇa's naughty childish behavior suddenly go?

As a great epic is full of expertly placed words and phrases, similarly, Kṛṣṇa now used precise language with perfect pronunciation. The nectarean beauty of Kṛṣṇa's effulgence far surpassed the splendor of a *tamala* tree blooming in spring with fresh sprouts and colorful flowers. Every part of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body diffused a special sweetness like the liquid nectar oozing from a lotus flower. When flower buds unfold their petals, pollen, and honey they become surrounded by swarms of eager bees. Similarly, at this time Kṛṣṇa's body revealed all the qualities of beauty, softness, fragrance, and sweetness. Kṛṣṇa combined these attributes with a playful desire to enjoy in a way just suitable for this age. This is symptomatic of His characteristic as Cupid personified and His *dhira lalita* nature (a youthful hero expert at joking, devoid of anxiety, and controlled by the *prema* of His beloveds).

The creeper named *syama-lata* becomes free from bitterness before it produces fruits. Even before fully ripe, the fruits are soft, tasty, and tempting. Similarly, though not fully mature, Kṛṣṇa's body displayed a tantalizing charm. As a necklace acquires more attraction when strung with different jewels, similarly, the elegance of Kṛṣṇa's body enhanced from the variety of radiant pastimes He performed. The serenity of a lake is destroyed when intoxicated elephants enter and playfully spray water from their trunks. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa's broad chest and wide shoulders emanated a sweet wantonness that enchanted and agitated the minds of all observers.

Radha and all the other beloved *gopis* of Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth along with the Lord. Kṛṣṇa's complexion compares with the hue of a blue sapphire, a blue lotus, or a fresh monsoon cloud. The complexion of the *gopis* defeats the brilliance of molten gold, lightning, and golden *campaka* flowers. The *gopis* appeared on earth within two weeks or one month of the birth of Sri Kṛṣṇa. The beauty of any one *gopi* could easily crush the pride of Parvati. To increase the various flavors of Radha-Govinda's *srngara rasa* (ecstatic conjugal love), the *gopis* appeared in Vrndavana to selflessly serve Kṛṣṇa, the fountainhead of *madhura-rasa*. Radhika and Syama could not have relished the summit of sweetness in *srngara rasa* without the Vraja *gopis*.

In the beginning stage, *tulasi manjaris* grow straight but upon developing they turn crooked. Similarly, Radhika and the other lovers of Kṛṣṇa behaved innocently and honestly as children, but upon attaining youth they were crafty and cunning. As a verse from an epic can have many different meanings, the *gopis*' speech at this time contained many outer and inner meanings. The slow and measured steps of the *gopis* resembled the gentle dripping of water falling off the edge of a roof after a monsoon. The *gopis* felt a little insecure about the new sensations they felt upon flowering into youth. As the whorl of a lotus flower looks like a golden demigod sitting there ruling over his kingdom, it seemed that the demigod of lust had suddenly taken possession of the *gopis*' hearts and established his kingdom there. They no longer cared to play in the dust of Vrndavana.

The palms of the *gopis* now displayed a pinkish hue like the rising sun. Their reddened lips looked like luscious ripe *bimba* fruits shining with nectar. Under the control of Cupid, their eyes and limbs moved in various

enchanting ways. Their hips expanded with shapely curves and their speech sounded sweet and captivating. The *gopis* now walked with petite and gentle steps. Their long, thick hair defeated the dense darkness. These beautiful characteristics heralded the glories of the *gopis* like a raised flag waving in the wind. The subtle powers of the nine planets now reposed within them.

Since they had lost all the attributes of their childhood, the *gopis* now plundered the special qualities of others. Their restless running here and there as children reentered their eyes as furtive glances. Their waists became very slender as the broadness of their childhood waists moved out to their hips. Their talkative nature as children turned into the abundant sweetness of youth.

The eight mystic *siddhis* now resided in the bodies of the *gopis*. *Anima-siddhi* (becoming smaller than the smallest) entered their waists. *Mahima-siddhi* (becoming bigger than the biggest) took shelter within the broad hips of the *gopis*. *Laghima-siddhi* (becoming lighter than the lightest) entered their rarely spoken words. *Prapti-siddhi* (acquire whatever one desires) took the form of the *gopis*' shyness. *Kamavasayita-siddhi* (obtain anything from anywhere) moved into the corner of their eyes. *Vasitva-siddhi* (ability to control others) took shelter in the *gopis*' glances. *Prakamya-siddhi* (fulfillment of all desires) manifested in the sweetness of their forms. *Isitva-siddhi* (create something wonderful or willfully annihilate something) entered their sidelong glances. Thus the eight mystic *siddhis* fully manifested within the bodies of the *gopis*.

When Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopi* Radhika appeared the whole world drowned in unlimited transcendental ecstasy. Radhika's touch turned the village of Vṛndavana into an abode of the sweetest fortune. The birth of the flower-archer Cupid attained perfection by Radha's presence, and the poets achieved perfection by praising the mellow exchanges of Radha and Kṛṣṇa.

The *gopis* were extremely anxious to meet Kṛṣṇa, but they did not manifest any external symptoms of their ecstasy. Transcendental lust had taken over their minds, but they did not show any lusty behavior. Though desiring, they did not act on their desire. They sustained their lives with just one thought: "Soon we will enjoy many playful pastimes with our beloved Syamasundara."

The *gopis* hid this intense longing deep in their hearts. They covered the emotions swirling within their hearts with a veneer of boundless shyness. Their sudden detachment from ordinary activities created a slight fear within their minds. The functions of their minds appeared to be hampered by a type of dreaminess. The incurable disease of inertia had mysteriously infected the *gopis*. The sudden transformation of the *gopis*' minds resembled a type of rice that is ripe inside though appearing raw outside.

Though the *gopis* concealed their internal attachment to Kṛṣṇa, their relatives detected a change in their behavior. The experience of *rasa* transcends verbal description. It can only be appreciated by tasting and feeling it. In the same way, no words can accurately depict the agitation in the *gopis*' minds due to their rising love for Kṛṣṇa. As a word like Ganga has both outer and inner meanings, similarly, no one can know the confidential desires within the minds of the *gopis* just by observing their outer behavior.

Somehow they maintained patience despite the fact that the forceful movements of their hearts spun their minds in circles. Though concerned, the *gopis* did nothing to stop the growing force of their desire. Just as one with a fever always feels thirsty, the *gopis* always felt severe aching in their bones and joints due to the raging fire of their intense desire to enjoy with Kṛṣṇa. As termites eat dry bamboo devoid of moisture (*rasa*), the termites of desire slowly nibbled away the dry, mellow (*rasa*) less hearts of the *gopis*. Although their minds vibrated with attraction for Kṛṣṇa, their tender bodies were not yet experienced in savoring the sweet mellows of love.

The disturbance in the *gopis*' minds made their cheeks turn pale yellow in color like the *lavalī* fruit. Their lips dried out like fresh leaves withered by the sun. As the petals of blue lotus flowers lose their luster with the arrival of winter, the childish glimmer in the blue lotus eyes of the *gopis* gradually faded with the onset of youthful desires. They breathed heavily as if afflicted by sunstroke. Their erratic movements resembled a deranged person moving here and there without any purpose. Uttering incoherent phrases, the *gopis* appeared like a person who has lost his speaking ability due to negative planetary influences. When a person develops a mood of detachment he loses interest in domestic affairs, similarly, the *gopis* became totally detached from their homes and relatives.

Day by day the minds of the *gopis* were steadily and spontaneously more attracted to Kṛṣṇa. This created contempt for their household chores. But they carefully hid these feelings even from their closest friends. As the *gopis* blossomed with youth, they looked incredibly beautiful and effulgent. Gradually, the *gopis* understood each other's *purva-raga* (love prior to meeting). Radhika's flourishing heart radiated most prominently. To hide the intolerable rise of affection that they felt for Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* acted in various tricky ways. With their intelligence they reassured themselves of the reality of their deep attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

Pushed by their disturbed minds, the *gopis* gave many valuable ornaments to each other in charity. The effulgence of this jewelry rivaled that of royalty, and resembled the beautiful radiance of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body. Receiving these ornaments, the *gopis* felt blissful and manifested various symptoms of divine ecstasy such as crying, thrill-bumps, and standing up of bodily hairs. *Kajala* highlighted their eyes and blue lotus flowers adorned their ears. The sweet fragrance of those flowers filled the earth with jubilation. Because those lotus earrings reminded them of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful body, they enlivened the *gopis* and removed the pain in their hearts. The blue lotuses made a perfect match for the golden bodies of the *gopis*.

While thus absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* chanted His sweet name. As the nectar of the name exhilarated their hearts, the *gopis* displayed various symptoms of ecstatic love. Waterfalls of tears washed away the *kajala* bordering their lotus-petal eyes. Their life airs seemed to pass out of their fragile bodies as they sighed deeply. Their heavy breathing and tear-filled eyes brought the *gopis* to a wonderful state of intensely desiring to meet Kṛṣṇa.

Overwhelmed with such feelings of love, one *gopi* joked with a girlfriend. "O *sakhi*! Ah! My heart pains and is full of grief. I am completely contaminated by lust. Upon seeing the beautiful form of Syamasundara, my tears have moistened the pathway of my eyes."

Her girlfriend replied cleverly, "Though you are not wearing a blue sapphire, your body is showing the symptoms of divine ecstasy. You have not directly smelled that blue lotus, yet even smelling it from a distance has filled your nose with jubilation. Your eyes and other senses are also

illuminated with ecstasy due to this absorption. Therefore I think you should have this ecstatic encounter again and again.”

Due to the appearance of their unparalleled love for Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* talked madly with each other. One *gopi* said to herself, “O *sakhi*! Do not lament! This is the life of one who rejects the rules of morality. Only because of this are you full of remorse and lamentation. It is a well-known fact that you have a secret love for Kṛṣṇa. Are you becoming adversely affected by the celestial power of all the gems you are wearing? Or are you just going crazy?”

All the married *gopis* like Radhika and Candravali, and the unmarried *gopis* who had fallen in love with Kṛṣṇa displayed these super-excellent emotional ornaments. They were curious to test each other’s loving mood towards Kṛṣṇa. The exquisite elegance and radiance of even the toenails of the *gopis* easily derided all the dazzling ornaments decorating the goddess of fortune. The beautiful raised hips of the *gopis* frustrated the pride of the celestial nymph Rambha, and crushed to dust the royal throne of Cupid, who now sits on their hips to rule his kingdom.

Their slender waists mocked the middle portion of Siva’s *damru* (small x-shaped drum). The luscious beauty of their full breasts made pomegranate fruits seem worthless. Indeed, upon seeing these wonderful fruits the pomegranate tree stops producing fruits. The rich red hue of their lips looked like the sky at sunrise or a blossoming *bandhujiva* flower. Their teeth beamed more brilliantly than shining pearls. One easily abandons the association of his very self just by glancing at them.

The arrow quiver of Cupid felt insulted upon seeing the charming openings of their noses. Upon viewing the captivating sidelong glances of the *gopis*, Cupid hung his face in shame and forgot how to shoot his arrows. The attractive blue eyes of the *gopis* heavily rebuked the natural beauty of the blossoming blue lotuses swaying in the Yamuna. The incomparable beauty of the moon-like lotus faces of the *gopis* appears to have closed the petals of the lotus flowers and dried up the lake supporting them.

The most beautiful of the *gopis* acted as group leaders and accepted submissive service from their faithful *gopi* associates. The *gopi* group leaders are eternally liberated companions of Sri Kṛṣṇa, and famous for

their expertise in relishing *srngara-rasa*. They always display favorable moods of love toward Kṛṣṇa. The intensity of their love, however, is not a by-product of passionate youth as in ordinary humans. Although the *gopis* are eternally the dearest lovers of Kṛṣṇa, according to human calculation it appears that the *gopis* begin to manifest intense loving emotions toward Kṛṣṇa when they enter youth. Mundane scholars should not be surprised by the natural expression of the *gopis*' *purva-raga* for Kṛṣṇa. The *gopis* did not taste this *rasa* upon attaining a particular age, but rather from birth they felt this inconceivably sweet form of love for Kṛṣṇa.

Visakha, a group leader and dearest friend of Sri Radha, exists as a sweet branch of an enchanting creeper of nectar. Once upon a time in a secluded place, Visakha composed an exceptional verse and spoke to her dear friend Radhika. “Hey Sumukhi! How has Your heart suddenly been so transformed? Your present state of mental agitation is greatly paining the minds of Your relatives. This mentality has been steadily growing within You from the day of its appearance. Even an intelligent person using his powers of argument and persuasion cannot understand Your mental state!

“Why are You no longer interested in Your studies? Previously, You took such care to train Your pet parrots, and You used to amuse Yourself watching the dancing peacocks. Why have You suddenly stopped playing Your *vina* and joking and laughing with Your dear friends? Has that Vanamali Kṛṣṇa stolen the precious jewel of Your mind?

“Hey *sakhi*! As a lake devoid of lotus flowers feels no pleasure, it is not surprising that You feel such anguish. There cannot be any happiness for the white lotus flowers until the life-giving sun rises. Besides seeing the monsoon cloud, nothing gives You joy. Your condition is just like the *cataki* bird who lives only by drinking rainwater falling in the sky, or like Rati-devi who accepts no other lover but the flower archer Kamadeva.

“Besides sitting on the lap of a rain cloud, can a lightning bolt ever cherish any other display of elegance? Does the wife of the cuckoo, except in the month of *caitra*, ever become intensely eager or worried about separation from her lover? Can a royal swan appear beautiful if there is no water in the lake? Can a waxing moon grow during the dark fortnight? Without a gold-testing stone, how can pure gold reveal its own character? Only in the presence of spring (*mādhava*—a month or Kṛṣṇa) does the creeper

(*mādhavī*— Radha) produce its sweet and fragrant flowers. White lilies blossom and give forth their honey only when the full moon appears overhead.

“Hey *sakhi* Radhe! Why are You concealing Your sentiments from me? Nothing can be hidden from a trained jeweler who can easily test the value and quality of a particular gem. In the same way, You cannot conceal Your emotions from me, for Your love is well known and praised by all. Be merciful and quickly tell me everything about Your new found love.”

After Visakha finished speaking, Lalita, who is an abode of all spiritual qualities adorned with Kṛṣṇa *prema*, said, “Like the branch of a supremely gorgeous tree of love, Visakha has spoken quite befittingly. The splendor of night is appreciated during the presence of the moon. But who can cherish the beauty of the moon more than a *cakori* bird?”

Radhika responded, “Lalite! You have acted very boldly and courageously by thinking about the possibility of an impossible attainment. When Visakha-sakhi attains the month of Madhava (Kṛṣṇa), she does not give up the nature of the star named Visakha, which enters the sky during the month of Madhava. Similarly, it is quite proper to declare that Visakha desires only to unite with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore do not consider Me to be like You, although Visakha usually helps to enhance the beauty of Madhava (Kṛṣṇa).”

Lalita replied, “Hey *sakhi*! Whatever is destined will definitely happen. This is because the month of Visakha is also known as the month Radha. It is only Radhika who gives service during the month named Radha or Visakha. Since the words Radha and Visakha are both of the same category, it can be said that the name of the star called Visakha is actually Radha. Who is the one who becomes beautified by that Radha star? Indeed, it is Kṛṣṇa who is adorned and served by that Radha.”

Her face beaming with a sweet nectarean smile, Radhika said, “Hey Lalite! What kind of flower appears on a creeper in the sky? One may answer by saying that it is a sky flower of course. Similarly, since your question is also illusory, should I give an illusory answer? Certainly *sakhi*, you have conquered Laksmi by your words. Now do not perturb Me by speaking imaginary statements.”

Then Syama-sakhi, whose body by nature is warm in the winter and cool in the summer, came before Radhika. Syama-sakhi had offered her heart to Radha and she came every day to serve Her. Seeing this softhearted, lotus-faced *sakhi* group leader filled Radhika's own butter soft heart with joy and enchantment. All of Radha's girlfriends displayed cunning behavior and expertise in all the sixty-four arts.

Srimati Radhika, though displaying an air of gravity to hide Her inner emotions, greeted Syama-sakhi with a gentle, sweet smile and said, "O lotus faced one! Your appearance before Me is like a cooling camphor lamp for My eyes. For you know what is in My mind and heart. So listen as I fill your ears with some pleasing words." Then Sri Radha told her what Lalita and Visakha had just spoken.

Syama-sakhi replied, "You are the crest-jewel of all the *vraja-sundaris* (beautiful women of Vrndavana), and the object of everyone's worship and adoration. Due to Your compassionate nature, You cannot tolerate the unhappiness of other *sakhis*. As the lotus has a natural attraction for the moon, You seem to have developed a spontaneous attraction to Kṛṣṇacandra, the moon of Gokula. The sweet fragrance of Your love spreads throughout Gokula."

Radhika, the leader of all the *gopis*, smiled and replied, "O *sakhi*! The effulgence of your smile brightens your beautiful face. Actually *sakhi*, it seems you desire that man, and that you are projecting your feelings on others. In this regard, you have achieved excellence in all respects. After all, is there any woman who does not desire to reach out and touch the sun or the moon? What woman would not give the valuable jewel of her love to attain that supremely precious blue sapphire (Sri Kṛṣṇa)? And what woman in the world does not wish to possess all the jewels in the ocean?"

Syama-sakhi said, "Why are You laughing and making fun of my words? You should be happy to hear my statements and accept them as mercy."

Radha replied, "O Syame! O you with a belly shaped like the leaf of a *peepul* tree. You do not understand Syamasundara's words. Please do not joke with Me. The phrase *tat purusa* means that He is very difficult to attain. So why are you proposing such an impossible idea? Or you can take *tat purusa* to mean that Kṛṣṇa exists in a supremely wonderful state. A

person like Me, therefore, could never achieve such a rare fortune. So, how have you become so sure of My success? How could you even guess such a thing? This might happen to someone else, but it could never happen to one as unfortunate as I. Although you are as dear as My very self, You have not fulfilled by desire. Now You are just joking with Me and having fun.”

Radharani continued, “O Syame! Your speech is unreasonable. Everyone in Gokula knows that Madhurika-sakhi is your devoted follower. When Madhurika said, ‘This parrot belongs to my Devi,’ Kṛṣṇa took the phrase “my Devi” to mean you. Therefore what is the use of thinking anything else.” Thus the dispute came to an end.

The Celebration of Kṛṣṇa’s Birthday

One year Nanda Maharaja organized a grand festival (*nandotsava*) to celebrate Kṛṣṇa’s auspicious birthday. Kṛṣṇa sat upon a celestial golden throne and all the Vraja *gopis* came to worship Him. The loud pounding of the *bheri* drums, the “*dhinta dhinta*” sounds from the *mrdangas* and *dundubhis*, the *bols* from the *madalas*, and the skillful beats on the *dolaks* announced the auspicious festival of Kṛṣṇa’s birthday. The joyous vibration of the occasion was enhanced by the excited voices and jingling ankle-bells of the elderly *gopis* as they greeted the various guests.

The learned *brahmanas* bathed Kṛṣṇa with thousands of streams of pure water poured from crystal pitchers while purifying the environment with perfectly enunciated *mantras*. This added waves of attraction to Kṛṣṇa’s already gorgeous body. They dried Kṛṣṇa with a fine linen cloth, dressed Him in a yellow silk *dhoti* and *caddar*, decorated Him with glittering gems, and anointed His forehead with *tilaka* made of *gorocana*. After fixing His jeweled bracelets and armbands, they tied some *durva* grass around His wrist with turmeric soaked thread.

Following the local customs of such blissful festivals, the merciful Yasoda blessed Kṛṣṇa by showering flowers upon His head. The elderly *gopis* sang traditional Vraja *bhasa* songs and waved lamps respectfully before the Lord. He, who is kind to His friends and the object of the *gopis*’ love, sat quietly on His *asana* accepting *arati*. Then with great enthusiasm the Vrajavasis joyfully offered gifts to Kṛṣṇa and gave Him a variety of creamy milk sweets.

To properly complete the festival, Yasoda had her servants invite the general public. Yasoda offered palatable food to the wives of the village leaders, the married women and the young girls of Vrndavana. Nanda Maharaja invited the cowherd men such as Sananda, Upananda, and their wives to take the sumptuous foods cooked by Rohini, the crest-jewel among women. When the cowherd men arrived Yasoda honored their youngest sons by worshiping them and offering pearl necklaces.

Though pained by separation from their husbands because they had to accompany their mothers-in-law to the festival, the newly married *gopis* put on ornate and elegant ankle-length dresses. The tender faces of these newlyweds glowed splendidly under the fine fabric of their veils. Feeling intensely attracted to Kṛṣṇa; the *gopis* disclosed their loving sentiments by offering Him their sidelong glances in charity. Their bangles fell silent as they embraced Kṛṣṇa with their eyes. They felt as if they were beholding a bouquet of beautiful flowers. No one noticed the auspicious meeting of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis*.

Though they had seen Kṛṣṇa before, the young unmarried *gopis* like Dhanya-sakhi just stood with their mothers and gazed timidly upon Him as if it was the first time. While bathing in the lake of Kṛṣṇa's exquisite beauty, the unmarried *gopis* expressed their desire to be His wives by offering Him mental flowers scented with camphor. They became shy, however, when Kṛṣṇa accepted their proposal with a favorable glance. No could detect the infinite bliss the *gopis* now relished within their hearts.

At that time, Kṛṣṇa's pet parrot left His side and landed on the lotus feet of a *gopi* whose heart throbbed with love. Hoping to develop a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, that excited *gopi* respectfully welcomed the parrot. Understanding the hint of the parrot, Kṛṣṇa cast the fresh lotus garland of His glance toward Radha, the daughter of Vrsabhanu. Kṛṣṇa's glance seemed to say, "O parrot! I saw this *gopi* Radha looking at Me from the watchtower as I took the cows to the forest."

No one else saw this secret exchange of sweet love. Understanding that Radha's body had become slender due to Her *purva-raga*, Kṛṣṇa looked upon Her with great compassion. Then Yasoda, shining with all auspicious qualities, smiled gently and took lotus-faced Radhika and the other *gopis* to another room to feed them.

After worshiping His best cows with scents and garlands, Vrajaraja Nanda escorted his guests to a wide jeweled veranda and sat them down on wooden seats. Then he bathed their feet, performed *acamana*, and offered *arghya*. Nanda arranged for Rohini and the wives of Sananda and Upananda to respectfully serve them first-class food and drink on gold plates. At the conclusion of the meal, Nanda personally gave them *betel* nuts, cardamom, scents, garlands, and ornaments. After the elderly men, children, and babies had eaten the feast, the married women and girls sat down in two rows to eat. Radhika and others received respect according to their position. Yasoda swam in an ocean of happiness as she personally served the *gopis*. In a voice that sounded as sweet as pattering raindrops of nectar, Yasoda spoke to each guest, “Please do not feel shy. Just eat to your heart’s content.”

Yasoda affectionately served everyone, and then honored them with offerings of *betel* nuts, garlands, ointments, *sindura*, and gold embroidered cloth. Finally, Yasoda, the crest jewel of good fortune, embraced each of the *gopis* before sending them home. Smiling broadly, Yasoda distributed the remnants of the feast to the sinless residents of the village. Nanda Maharaja presented gifts to the dancers and musicians while Yasoda blessed them with her upraised palm. Upon concluding the festival, Yasoda thought holding such a festival everyday would surely fulfill all her desires. For a moment she felt a touch of sadness, fearing that she may not have fully satisfied all the guests.

Playing Ball

After His birthday festival Kṛṣṇa and His boyfriends spent the days in the forests herding the cows. While walking they rolled clusters of *kunda* flowers into balls, which looked sesame seed *laddus*, and bombard each other’s bodies with infallible aim. The boys enjoyed this sport very much. Sometimes they threw the balls high into the sky as if to tantalize the *svarga-devīs* (demigoddesses). At other times they threw them horizontally, as if making earrings for the deities of the directions.

Running along with His companions, the son of the king of Vṛndavana absorbed Himself in playing and did not even stop for a moment’s rest. To catch a ball thrown high above His head, Kṛṣṇa looked up, held His tilted turban with His left hand, and caught the ball perfectly in His right hand.

Whenever Kṛṣṇa threw a ball high in the sky, He gracefully raised His right hand, and squinted His eyes to reduce the glare of the sun.

With His curly hair flying about, Gopala played for hours on end with His friends. His face and body covered in perspiration, Kṛṣṇa looked like the autumnal full moon studded with pearls. When the game ended Kṛṣṇa took shelter of some shady trees to relieve His fatigue. One friend spread his cloth on the ground as a bed, one friend fanned Kṛṣṇa with leaves, and another massaged His feet. In this way the cowherd boys humbly served Kṛṣṇa. The boyfriends of the Lord, who had performed heaps of pious activities, expressed varieties of blissful *rasas* as they passed their days herding cows with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul of all.

The Killing of Dhenukasura

The demigods felt great satisfaction as they flew in sky above Vrndavana watching Kṛṣṇa's blissful cowherding pastimes. The happiness of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama increased moment after moment as they played with their friends. One day everyone listened to Kṛṣṇa narrate the glories of Vrndavana's trees, creepers, bees, deer, and animals to His elder brother. Due to the hot sun, drops of perspiration appeared on the foreheads of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama. To relieve Their exhaustion They rested in the shade of some thick foliage. The cowherd boys, while laughing and speaking sweetly, removed the fatigue of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama by offering various items. These personal services increased their affection for Kṛṣṇa more and more.

Sometimes Kṛṣṇa comforted Balarama by personally massaging His feet and offering other services. Feeling refreshed, Kṛṣṇa and Balarama ignored the hot sun and played again with the cowherd boys laughing gleefully in great delight. Overcome with merriment, they followed the cows into the forest. Everyone relished a festive mood bathing in the natural aura of Kṛṣṇa's sweet love.

With a stream of honey-dipped words, the boys spoke to Kṛṣṇa, who is generous, attractive, expert in all types of sports, full of matchless strength, and the best among all worthy persons. The cowherd boys said, "O Kṛṣṇa! O supreme enjoyer and all-powerful one! Please hear us. Our bodies can no longer tolerate the severe hunger we feel. Nearby is a forest of *tala* (palm)

trees full of mouth-watering fruits. The sweet aroma of those ripened fruits attracts our minds. Simply shaking the trees will bring all the luscious fruits to the ground. Our desire to have those fruits is very great. If You think it is a good idea, then let us go to that *tala* forest”

After hearing this, Kṛṣṇa agreed to satisfy their desires by entering the forest guarded by the evil Dhenuka. While observing the beauty of the forest, Kṛṣṇa stated His intentions to take the fruits. The branches of the trees bent down from the weight of the ripened, bright orange *tala* fruits. The tightly packed clusters of fruits appeared like one big fruit.

The fruit trees practically touched the clouds and were beyond the reach of the common people. The fragrance of the *tala* fruits pleased the entire earth. Being greedy for that fragrance, the wind stole it and made a rustling sound in the leaves of the trees as it ran away. Kṛṣṇa glanced happily at those trees and gave the command, “Pick the fruits!”

The cowherd boys threw stones at the *tala* fruits with their restless hands. Dhenuka (a demon in the form of a donkey) exploded with anger upon hearing the loud sound of the falling fruits. Suddenly the sky darkened from a huge dust cloud created by the scratching of Dhenuka’s hooves, and the earth trembled from the stomping of his feet. His deafening roar frightened the demigods. Ignoring the other boys, Dhenuka brayed louder than thunder while attacking Kṛṣṇa and Balarama.

Before the invincible Lords, Dhenuka looked like a grasshopper jumping into a fire. Intending to kill Them, he charged at Balarama and violently kicked the Lord’s chest with the hooves of his hind legs. With the fingers of His left hand Balarama seized Dhenuka by his hooves and threw him into the top of a palm tree. The demon groaned loudly and died. Seeing the death of Dhenuka, his fellow ass demons sought revenge for the loss of their close friend. Large numbers of strong donkeys immediately attacked Kṛṣṇa and Balarama. But the two brothers easily killed them all.

Abundant fruits fell from the trees and piled up on the ground below, which turned muddy from the juice of so many broken fruits. The boys threw the unripe fruits around in play. Knowing the rules of purity, they did not touch the fruits contaminated by the blood of the demons. Just smelling the strong fragrance of the *tala* fruits satisfied them.

Kṛṣṇa, Balarama, and the cowherd boys collected the cows while admiring the stout trees of the forest. Noticing the arrival of afternoon, Kṛṣṇa made His way back to Vrndavana. Kṛṣṇa, the crest jewel of lovers, performed human-like feats while playing His flute and wandering on the bank of the Manasi Ganga.

The pleasant evening breeze carried the clouds of dust raised by the hooves of the cows returning to Vrndavana. The dust appeared to kiss the cowherd boys as it slowly sprinkled down on their hair and turbans. The Vraja *gopis*, watching intently from the rooftops, lost their minds upon hearing the melodious sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute and seeing His delightful face. Conveying His secret attachment, Kṛṣṇa glanced lovingly toward them with His lotus petal eyes before entering His house.

When Kṛṣṇa and Balarama arrived, Yasoda and Rohini enthusiastically cleansed the dust from Their bodies, washed and rubbed Them with oil, and bathed Them. After dressing and ornamenting the two brothers, they fed them and laid Them to rest. By nature Kṛṣṇa is an unfathomable ocean of sweetness, and the best among all qualified persons. His beauty illuminates the whole universe, and dispels the lamentation from the hearts of His obedient followers.

Chapter Nine: Vanquishing the Kaliya Serpent Extinguishing the Forest Fire

One day, Vanamali Kṛṣṇa left His brother Rama at home and went out with His friends to tend the cows and play beside the Yamuna. At that time, the serpent Kaliya, the son of Kadru, lived in a lake within the river Yamuna. Kaliya had taken shelter in the Yamuna, the daughter of Surya-deva, to hide from his enemy Garuda. This venomous snake, the embodiment of the mellow of fear (*bhaya rasa*), existed in Vrndavana like an incurable heart disease. He was like death waiting as a helpful friend to engage one, or Rudra's fire of devastation that destroys the three worlds.

The burning venom of the great serpent Kaliya constantly heated and boiled the waters of the Yamuna. Yamuna-devi felt like she had a black ball of fire within her belly. Indeed, the poisonous vapors thus created polluted the air, and caused birds flying overhead to fall down into the water. The entire atmosphere was contaminated by the inauspicious presence of Kaliya, who continually harassed the inhabitants of Vrndavana. The forceful exhalation of fiery poison from his nostrils illuminated the Yamuna's waves with a crimson golden radiance. The beauty of this scene resembled the waves of the salt ocean glittering under the moonlight. The dense black smoke lingering above the Yamuna indicated the presence of a raging fire within. Nothing could live in the Yamuna except Kaliya's wives and sons due to the calamitous situation caused by the burning poison of that crooked serpent. As one takes shelter under an umbrella, Kaliya stayed safely in a deep lake within the Yamuna.

The cowherd boys and cows sipped some water from the Yamuna to quench their thirst. Although the *gopas* have eternal transcendental bodies, by the supreme will of Kṛṣṇa they fell unconscious immediately after drinking. Kṛṣṇa, the destroyer of demons, worried for a moment about His friends and then He quickly revived them with a sidelong glance. It appeared that life-giving nectar dripped from Kṛṣṇa's lotus eyes. Returning to consciousness, the boys felt astonished and smiled gently. They warmly embraced each other and talked among themselves in great happiness. One cowherd boy said, "Kṛṣṇa is wonderful. He rescued us just like He did

when we wandered into the cave-like mouth of Aghasura. We almost died from drinking that poisonous water but Kṛṣṇa mercifully saved us. It seems that He has given *sanjivani rasa* to revive us.” After speaking thus, all the *gopas* looked lovingly at their dearest friend.

Since Kṛṣṇa had descended from the spiritual world specifically to subdue envious demons, He immediately climbed to the top of a very high *kadamba* tree beside the Yamuna. That tall *kadamba* touched the clouds and kissed the sky. With a desire to crush the pride of Kaliya, the incomparable and inconceivable Lord Kṛṣṇa prepared Himself for a fight. He gathered His locks of hair, retied His turban, tightened His belt, and clenched His lotus hand into a fist eager for victory. Kṛṣṇa’s tender body and slender waist displayed the prime of His joyful youth. Totally relaxed, Kṛṣṇa glanced gently toward the cowherd boys and said, “Do not be afraid My friends. My transcendental effulgence will dispel all misfortune. Just wait here and watch the cows.”

His face illuminated by a row of radiant teeth, Kṛṣṇa beamed a confident smile. With His fathomless intelligence and charming characteristics Kṛṣṇa easily removes the pride and arrogance of materialistic people. Kṛṣṇa enthusiastically leaped into the Yamuna, just as a kingfisher dives into a river to catch its prey. Kṛṣṇa’s forceful plunge pushed the Yamuna over her banks. The deadly poison from the serpent rose up into a mass of foam cresting on the high waves of the river. The cows and cowherd boys ran away in fear upon seeing these ominous waves rushing toward the banks.

Kṛṣṇa dove so deeply into the River Yamuna that it seemed He went to trample the Patala region of the universe. Kṛṣṇa sported in Kaliya’s lake like a lordly elephant—swirling His mighty arms and making the water resound in various ways. This agitation caused the poisonous water to burst into flames. Unable to bear the vigorous vibrations, Kaliya felt as if his life was being thrashed out of him.

Kaliya saw Kṛṣṇa’s beauty surpassing the sublime elegance of a *tamala* tree. Kṛṣṇa’s eyes looked peaceful and pleasing, and His handsome effulgent form easily defeated the sweetness of Kandarpa. Seeing Kṛṣṇa’s body covered with fragrant yellow sandalwood pulp easily destroys one’s false pride. Despite beholding this wonderful *darsana*, the envious Kaliya felt Kṛṣṇa to be the source of an intolerable fever. Shaking with anger,

Kaliya furiously lunged at Kṛṣṇa, bit Him on the chest, and attempted to squeeze Kṛṣṇa to death by completely enveloping Him in his mighty coils.

Kaliya considered how this person had so brazenly violated his watery domain. Beset with doubt and suspicion about the identity of Kṛṣṇa, who removes the power of the best of snakes, Kaliya pondered, “Who is this unknown person who has created such a disturbance? And where has He come from?”

The proud, impudent, materially attached Kaliya wondered how Kṛṣṇa—a mere boy, blissful and beautiful with blooming youth—could have so effortlessly subdued the massive Aghasura. Finally he concluded that Kṛṣṇa must have the ability to expand Himself to any unlimited size. Nevertheless, Kaliya tried to smother and crush Kṛṣṇa by expanding his own body to monstrous proportions. Failing in his endeavor, Kaliya succumbed to exhaustion.

On one level the supremely independent Lord created an inauspicious atmosphere of impending death just to see how much love the Vrajavasis had for Him, and to make them impatient to run to Him. But on another level Kṛṣṇa, His handsome chest adorned with the glistening *kaustubha* gem, performed this pastime of being bound by Kaliya just to satisfy His desire to dance on the hoods of the serpent. He merely awaited the approval of His Vrajavasi friends and relatives standing on the shore of the River Yamuna.

Observing the lord of their hearts trapped in the snake’s coils and submerged under the water, the cows and cowherd boys filled with fear and lamentation. Paralyzed by grief, the cowherd boys froze in place, held their palms on their foreheads, and wept profusely while crying out piteously to Kṛṣṇa, “How painful! How painful! We cannot bear to live!” Seeing the whole world as void and nearing destruction, they collapsed on the ground. Feeling they had entered an ocean of poison, the cowherd boys nearly died from the devastating inundation of simultaneously experiencing the eight symptoms of transcendental ecstasy. Viewing the Vrajavasis enduring such misfortune, the demigods, their hair loosened and clothing disheveled, felt their hearts pierced with flaming arrows. In great distress they called out, “Alas! Alas!”

The three types of fearful omens, namely those on the earth, in the sky, and in the bodies of living creatures, which announce imminent danger, descended upon Vrndavana at that moment. Jackals shrieked harshly at the sun, smoke and dust as dark as the horns of a buffalo blanketed the sky, and the sun appeared dull and lackluster. High winds howled in every direction and violent earthquakes shook the earth. Afflicted by the inauspiciousness, the left side of men's bodies (hand, eye, thigh), and the right side of women's bodies trembled. Anxiety seized the atmosphere and disturbed everyone's minds with grief and discontent.

Perceiving all these inauspicious omens in his village, Nanda Maharaja and the *gopas* understood that a devastating time had assailed the earth. The hostile unfavorable atmosphere submerged their hearts in the mud of fearfulness. Although they had innumerable experiences of the unlimited majesty of Kṛṣṇa, due to the covering potency of Yogamaya, they knew only His sweet intimacy. Forgetting about the Lord's omnipotence, they simply worried about the safety of Kṛṣṇa.

While lamenting over the disturbances some of the learned *gopas* said, "O! How dreadful! Due to negligence and naivete our innocent Kṛṣṇa has wandered alone into the dense forest which is infested with various demons that always bring calamities. And He has gone there without the company of His intelligent, powerful elder brother Balarama. Without our beloved Kṛṣṇa we cannot live. But since we cannot fathom the actual situation from here, let us invoke good fortune by chanting, 'Siva! Siva!'"

Overwhelmed with fear and lamentation, the Vrajavasis quickly left their eating and drinking and rushed out intent on finding Kṛṣṇa. The whole village joined in that procession from one year-old babies to elderly men. They followed the path marked by Kṛṣṇa's footprints, which bore the unique symbols of a flag, barleycorn, thunderbolt, lotus flower, and elephant goad.

Nanda and Vrajesvari Yasoda, Balarama, the elderly *gopas*, and all the children hurried along the path to the bank of the Yamuna River. From a distance they saw Kṛṣṇa trapped in the lake, motionless within the coils of the venomous black serpent. Stepping closer, they immediately understood the situation just by seeing the facial expressions of Kṛṣṇa's friends lying

unconscious on the bank. Witnessing this, the Vrajavasis succumbed to anguish and confusion.

Though standing on the bank, they felt they too were drowning in the poisonous lake. Their hearts burned just like a person afflicted by poison. The women fell on the ground like creepers thrown down by a high wind, and the men toppled like uprooted trees. They sprawled out in all directions beside the lake.

Filled with panic and shock, Nanda Maharaja cried out in a voice choked with tears, “O my darling son! Why have you suddenly done this? O dearest of all, please come back to us.” Gripped with lamentation, the cowherd men fell down unconscious on the ground around the King of Vrndavana. Yasoda swooned with equal distress and sadness. Sympathizing with her and wailing piteously like *kurari* birds, the elderly *gopis* collapsed on the ground next to the Queen of Vrndavana.

At first the young *gopis* could neither cry nor lament as they stared at Kṛṣṇa with unblinking eyes glittering with love. Then their piteous wailing strained the atmosphere, and the downpour of their tears muddled the bank of the Yamuna. Taking shelter in the embrace of the *sakhi* of personified unconsciousness, they fell flat on the ground like creepers and trees cut down by a hurricane. Though fainting, the *gopis* retained their life airs by recounting the pastimes of the beloved of Vrndavana. Even in that miserable state the *gopis* somehow maintained their existence. Indeed, intense lamentation permeated the atmosphere.

Seeing the extent of Kṛṣṇa’s influence, Haladhara (Balarama) looked on with amazement. Then Balarama said, “O father, because Kṛṣṇa is so dear to you, your heart is burning and you are overwhelmed with lamentation. Nevertheless, you need not be in anxiety for this body that is existing due to Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. O Mago! (Yasoda) Do not cry or lament anymore. Please hear My words and be patient. O Vrajavasis! You should not be so grief-stricken now that you have ascertained the extent of the danger.

“You are unaware of the magnitude of My younger brother’s valor which always increases the joy of others. I am the only one who knows the extent of His transcendental identity. Among the greatest demigods, who can

understand even a fraction of His opulence? Please be steady in your intelligence.

“For the lion-like Kṛṣṇa it is a paltry achievement to subdue the demon Kaliya. Just as the wind cannot conquer a mountain, or as darkness can never cover the sun, or as a clump of reeds can never extinguish a raging forest fire, similarly, Kṛṣṇa, who wears *makara* earrings, is not the least bit afraid of this tiny water snake. Therefore give up your grief. Any moment now My brother will finish this lowly snake and come out of the water. You can have complete confidence in My words.”

By His illusory energy Kṛṣṇa bewilders both the demons and the demigods. He possesses unlimited transcendental opulences and has a most elegant form. He relishes His own prowess within and without, and everyone knows His boundless power. To the surrendered soul He is an ocean of happiness.

Therefore, to remove the acute distress of His father, mother, and other relatives, Kṛṣṇa decided to free Himself from the serpent the moment Balarama, who glowed like pure moonlight, finished speaking. Enwrapped in the thick coils of that black snake, Kṛṣṇa looked as exquisite and striking as the full moon embraced by the branch of a dark tree. Releasing Himself from Kaliya’s clutches, Kṛṣṇa lifted His lotus face and cast a blissful smile toward the Vrajavasis.

Conchshells blasted from the assembly house of the demigods, the *dundubhis* pounded “*dhun! dhun! dhun! dhun!*” and the *bheris* (kettledrums) reverberated deep rhythms. The thunderous combination of these sounds of victory threatened to break the eardrums of all listeners. Gradually the Vrajavasis regained their lives upon hearing the auspicious drums of the demigods. As they pushed themselves up from the ground with their arms, they heard that joyous celestial music spreading in all directions and saw Lord Balarama standing nearby.

Everyone shivered in fright upon noticing that extremely fierce serpent, whose body looked blacker than iron and who spewed foam and fiery sparks from His mouth. The effulgence of the gems on his hundred heads diffused throughout the sky. Sparks shot from His burning eyes and his gaping mouth resembled a pan full of boiling *ghee*. Raising his hoods high,

Kaliya pounced on Kṛṣṇa. The pride intoxicated Kaliya appeared to be licking the upper limits of the sky with his two hundred tongues. To enact yet another playful pastime Kṛṣṇa slipped from Kaliya's grip and mounted his broad serpentine heads, which resembled a garden of large swaying creepers.

Pointing toward Kṛṣṇa, Balarama said, "Look at Kṛṣṇa! His tender body and eyes beautified with *kajala* appear before you as personified death for the Kaliya serpent. His priceless jeweled ornaments sparkle a million times more than the fiery sparks dancing inside Kaliya's poisonous mouth. Kṛṣṇa has all the power to finish this demon, and He is artistically dressed with a turban, earrings, yellow cloth, and a fragrant forest garland. His beautiful curly hair has loosened during the fight to free Himself from the grip of the serpent. Tightening His cloth, Kṛṣṇa is revealing a desire to kick down the heads of Kaliya and enjoy a dance there.

"Look, just to please all of you, Kṛṣṇa is determined to extinguish the dazzling gems on the hood of the serpent. Kṛṣṇa's body glows with a desire to dance and diminish the radiance of those jewels. Understand this deeply and try to realize the purport of My words. Do not worry anymore about this insignificant calamity."

Kṛṣṇa smiled and relished the mellow of laughter while Baladeva spoke. The Vrajavasis forgot their lamentation upon hearing Balarama's reassuring words. Although still overwhelmed with fear due to seeing the gigantic size of the king of the snakes, they blossomed with happiness upon seeing Kṛṣṇa whose gleaming joyful eyes looked as pleasing as *kunda* flowers.

Before enacting His dramatic dance on the hoods of Kaliya, Kṛṣṇa cast a sidelong glance to enliven His friends and relatives, who brimmed with affection and complete attachment to Him. Accompanied only by His mind, Kṛṣṇa displayed amazing skill as the best of dancers and the savior of His devotees. The Siddhas, Kinnaras, Gandharvas, Vidyadharas and other demigods immediately arrived there to show their respect and appreciation for Kṛṣṇa's unique dance performance. This joyful group of demigods exhibited their talent in music, singing and dancing by playing sweet melodies on *mṛdaṅgas*, *murajas*, *panavas*, and *panas*.

Sri Kṛṣṇa, the unlimited reservoir of wonder who is expert in all artistic skills, appeared to be cruelly smashing down Kaliya's heads with His feet. But actually Kṛṣṇa showed him the greatest mercy. The demigods delighted in the variety of fast, slow, and medium dances shown by the Lord as they kept time with the right rhythms. The instruments of the demigods softly sounded *thiyā-ta-ta*, *ta-ta-thiyā*, *thai-thai-thai*, *thaiyā-ta-ta*. They also played loud and high-pitched sounds.

The demigods brought out newer and newer melodies by combining different notes, sounds, and rhythms. Responding accordingly, Kṛṣṇa nimbly stepped from one hood of the serpent to another. The demigods, however, could not keep up with the unique self-styled dancing of the Lord. Kṛṣṇa, the supreme controller, moved rhythmically on the hoods of the serpent, and expertly danced in such a way to crush and suppress each of his hoods. As the beat *drung-drung-drung*, *drimi-drimi*, *tung-tung-tung* boomed faster and louder, Kṛṣṇa's brilliance increased more and more as He stomped on the serpent's heads.

The extraordinary expertise of Kṛṣṇa's dancing crushed the pride of the Apsaras and Gandharvas. Although feeling embarrassed, they tried their best to keep pace with Kṛṣṇa. Defeated in their attempt, they just danced delightfully on their own. The resounding sounds of *dundubhis*, the deep reverberations of kettledrums, the chanting of hymns by the sages, and the showering of flowers from Nanda-kanana exhilarated the Vrajavasis and depressed the demons.

The ruthless steps of Vanamali Kṛṣṇa's *tandava* dance devastated the serpent. Blood streamed from Kaliya's mouths, his eyes popped out, and his hoods completely collapsed. Seeing their husband vanquished and heart broken, the Nagapatnis (wives of Kaliya) felt sorry for him and cried piteously. Out of affection for him they thought, "Our husband will not survive unless he attains the mercy of the Lord." Abandoning all fear and shyness, the Nagapatnis put their children on their laps and approached Kṛṣṇa to petition Him on behalf of their husband.

The Nagapatnis offered prayers to Sri Kṛṣṇa with sweet voices: "O Lord, all glories unto You! O crest-jewel on the head of the demigods! Who other than You can be the Supreme Brahman? Brahma and Siva constantly glorify You, the unlimited ocean of transcendental qualities. The *yogis* and

paramahamsas happily praise and meditate upon Your lotus feet, which are forever massaged by the auspicious lotus hands of Goddess Laksmi. As a swan extracts milk from a watery mixture, the *paramahamsas* reject the four desirable goals of human life to immerse themselves in the bliss of Your service.

“O Lord, extolled throughout the *Vedas*! Please hear our prayer. O Lord, You are the personification of eternity, bliss and knowledge! You assume a transcendental body to annihilate all the demons! You are the oldest, the origin of everything, and yet You are an ever-fresh youth. You are the fountainhead of all the Visnu expansions! O Supreme Personality of Godhead! Please give up Your anger and show us Your mercy!

“O Vasudeva, You are the life-giving Lord of all! O Sankarsana, You remove all the miseries of the universe! O Pradyumna, You are the treasure of love for all the Vrajavasis! O Aniruddha, Your Yogamaya potency prevents ordinary people from perceiving You! You are the Supersoul of all the demigods! Ah! You are the life and soul of the Vrajavasis. Be pleased with our prayers, O Lord, for the life of our husband is about to depart.

“Your lotus feet which delight the *atmaramas*, remove all mental anxieties, and are rarely achieved even in *samadhi* now stand on the hoods of our husband. O Lord, we have no idea how Kaliya has attained such a rare fortune. This wicked snake deserves to be punished. Only by Your mercy can one give up his wickedness and follow the righteous path. It is impossible for a living entity to do this on his own.

“O Lord! You alone maintain the entire universe created by the three modes of material nature by the mode of goodness, which purifies the mind. You create the world with passion and by ignorance, which is darker than night, You destroy the creation. O mighty armed! It is by name only that Visnu, who rides on Garuda, is called the maintainer, and that Brahma, who sits upon a lotus, is the creator, and that Siva, who sits atop Nandi, is called the destroyer.

“O one who is dear to those who have nothing! Living entities appear by different combinations of the modes of nature. Being born in the mode of ignorance, it is natural for a snake like Kaliya to be crooked. As it is impossible to see a flower creeper in the sky, it also impossible to find

gentle behavior or good manners in him. He does nothing good for anyone, and he has no power to overcome Your *maya*. This is the nature of one who lives in hole.

“His actions cannot be considered offensive because that is his very nature. So how can You, who are eternally liberated, the ocean of mercy, and full of all opulence, deny him Your mercy? You always treat everyone equally and all Your acts convey auspiciousness. Therefore, please quickly show Your mercy to our afflicted husband. It does not befit You to kill such a lowly living entity.

“Even Siva, Brahma, Laksmi, and the *sannyasis* who perform *sadhana*, meditation, and attentive service cannot understand You. Hence, how can Kaliya, who is bewildered by pride and ignorance, know You? Your playful kicks and dancing on his heads have practically killed him. Although he is a very powerful serpent, he is so weakened that only his life air remains. Indeed he is cruel and ill behaved, but nevertheless he is one of Your living entities. Alas! We hope he will not die. Please forgive his offense and return our husband so that we will not become widows.” The gentle beautiful Nagapatnis petitioned the Lord with piteous choked voices.

Kṛṣṇa responded compassionately by dissipating His anger and reducing the punishment. Smiling sweetly, Kṛṣṇa replied to the wives of Kaliya, “Do not fear. Although I am very angry, your sweet appeal has satisfied Me. As a monsoon shower extinguishes a forest fire, your pleasing prayers have removed My intense anger. As a result I will spare his life. Now I request you to take your husband and return to your original abode. Since your husband’s heads are now decorated with My bliss-giving lotus footprints, Garuda will feel blessed to see them. From now on you need not fear him.”

His false pride broken like a person bent over from carrying a heavy mass of iron, Kaliya felt relieved and happy by the Lord’s assurance of protection. With fear, devotion, and submission Kaliya said, “O Lord! With all Your opulence You appear in this world to crush the demons and award the treasure of *prema* to Your devotees. As long as the sun and the moon remain, Your beautiful pastimes will give joy to the minds of Your devotees. You always bring immediate auspiciousness to the unfortunate. O abode of compassion!

“The River Yamuna is the ideal place for Your pastimes. Therefore You have rightly punished me for my offense of poisoning her waters. Who could have shown me more mercy than You? Your dancing has decorated my hoods with the splendid marks of Your lotus feet. Now my life has become completely auspicious. O younger brother of Baladeva! By Your order I will now return to Ramanaka Island. O Supreme Lord of all the demigods! Due to some misfortune I have offended You. O You who wear *makara kundala* earrings! Please forgive me for my offensive behavior.”

Concluding his prayer, Kaliya took out some special jewels from his collection and presented a valuable ruby and pearl necklace to Kṛṣṇa as a gift. Then he and his family offered obeisances to the Lord and left the Yamuna. Immediately the water transformed into the sweetest nectar. After Kaliya left, the prince of Vraja, who ever enacts fresh and effulgent playful pastimes, climbed up on the bank of the Yamuna. The golden bangles on His lotus hands glistened attractively and His shimmering *dhوتي* defeated the brightness of lightning.

Extinguishing the Forest Fire

With a pure loving heart Kṛṣṇa paid obeisances to His parents and all the Vrajavasis. By taking part in Kṛṣṇa’s enchanting pastimes they crossed an ocean full of different mellows including fear, curiosity, and bliss. Nanda, Yasoda, and Balarama warmly embraced the beloved of Vrndavana. The cowherd girls cast sidelong glances toward Kṛṣṇa. The innocent cows encircled Kṛṣṇa, and looked at Him for a long time with eyes full of tears and hearts full of delight. While smelling the pleasing fragrance of Kṛṣṇa’s body the cows felt overwhelmed and happily licked Him. It seemed that the cows inquired about Kṛṣṇa’s welfare by mooing with choked voices.

Hearing the cheering of His friends submerged Kṛṣṇa in an ocean of happiness. Then the subduer of Kaliya warmly embraced each of His boyfriends. That sweet Lord, who pleased the Vrajavasis by living with them in Vrndavana, relaxed on the riverbank enjoying with His friends. Seeing the setting sun, Vrajaraja Nanda announced, “Listen, it is almost night. I see the frightening darkness as a personification of Rudra. My glorious son has restored the purity of this lake by removing the fiery poison. So let us spend the night here in this auspicious place.”

On hearing his words everyone felt happy. The ladies and cowherd girls became ecstatic to again see the beautiful form of Kṛṣṇa, which is more elegant than a monsoon cloud, ever youthful, full of joy, and attractive to all. By gazing at their captivating Lord the *gopis* felt relieved of their anguish and mental disturbance that had previously felt like the itching of a skin sore.

Keeping Kṛṣṇa in the center, the Vrajavasis surrounded Him in five circles. In the first circle nearest Kṛṣṇa stood Vrajaraja Nanda and the elderly *gopas*, and next to them Yasoda and the cowherd boys assembled. The young *gopis* stood safely beside their mothers, and the married *gopis* remained near their mothers-in-law. The husbands of the loving *gopis* formed the second circle. The men in the third circle protected everyone with bows and arrows. Cows and calves comprised the fourth circle. Holding a variety of weapons, Vraja's famous chivalrous soldiers formed the fifth circle. These five circles made a *vyuha* around Kṛṣṇa.

The Vrajavasis spent half of the night discussing the incredible beauty of Kṛṣṇa and His spectacular defeat of Kaliya. After they fell asleep a sweet and pleasant time arrived. In the quiet hours of night the eyes and minds of the *gopis* derived the fullest satisfaction from lovingly gazing at the attractive moon-like face of Kṛṣṇa. Candravali and other *gopi* leaders relished a joyous festival for the eyes.

The desire which Radha and Kṛṣṇa had previously sprouted burst into bloom now that there was an opportunity for fulfillment. Eager to meet, Radha and Kṛṣṇa extended their necks in anticipation. With Their eyes locked in enchantment They sported with each other through romantic glances. The lotuses of Their eyes played seductively. First Radha disturbed Kṛṣṇa's vision with a sidelong glance. The agitation resembled the shaking of lotus flowers by the skittish movements of a wagtail bird. When Kṛṣṇa opened the lotus of His sidelong glance, the flower of Radha's shyness reduced to a bud.

Struck by these lotuses, Cupid's arrows forcefully returned to the god of love. As the curtain of darkness fell, the rising love between Radha and Kṛṣṇa appeared as Cupid to envelop Them. Candravali and other *gopis* thought, "O! Kṛṣṇa is only giving His love to the daughter of Vrsabhanu."

Suddenly some other *gopis* that had remained awake discussing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes cried loudly, "O look! Look! There is a great danger ahead!"

Hearing the commotion, the cows woke up and cautiously looked in all directions. The *gopa* leaders talked among themselves, "What is happening?" Those who were asleep awoke and shouted in alarm. Looking worriedly toward Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* said, "The nails of His feet are more worshipable than millions of our lives. Let there be no danger to Him!" Judging from their frightened glances, Kṛṣṇa, the darling of Vrndavana, looked at them with love and assured them in a grave voice, "Fear not! Fear not!"

Speculating about the impending calamity, the people said, "Is Kaliya seeking revenge and racing along the path beside the lake? Or is it a large group of wild elephants charging madly due to intoxication from playing in a mountain pool?" Then someone announced in a loud voice mixed with pain, "Hey look! Come on, there is no way out! Surrounding us is a huge forest fire about to devour us. Fire! Fire!"

On hearing this, Vrajaraja Nanda became afraid, but remembering Gargamuni's words he immediately approached his son and said, "O my dear son! Please save us! Save us! Just in front of us is an immense forest fire. You are the one and only Lord of Vrndavana. This terrible fire is burning down Your home of Vrndavana, and rushing toward us with tremendous speed. Only You can put out this fire. There can be no more auspiciousness unless it is extinguished."

Seeing His mother, father, friends, and family members overwhelmed with distress, Madhava said, "Do not fear!" An ordinary forest fire cannot appear in the transcendental land of Vrndavana. However, Kṛṣṇa, by His own sweet will, manifested a fire to enchant everyone with His amazing pastimes. The forest fire burned all the dry trees in its path. The leaves on the trees produced a crackling sound as they burned. Frightened animals fled in all directions from the raging fire. Nanda saw the gigantic fire licking the sky with its flames.

While observing the forest fire, Kṛṣṇa thought, "This devastating fire is killing many beasts and threatening the lives of My friends. I feel compassion for the trees whose leaves are burning to ashes. And it hurts Me

to hear the terrified crying of the cows. The thick clouds of smoke have blinded the poor birds flying overhead. Maddened with fear, the deer are running hither and thither. Under these circumstances what shall I do?"

As one pacifies the desires of poverty-stricken persons as soon as they arise, Kṛṣṇa extinguished the fire as soon as it appeared. It disappeared as quickly as an illusion, a magician's trick, a flash of lightning, an object in a dream, or as the wealth of an unfortunate person. Under the shower of Kṛṣṇa's merciful glance the trees, shrubs, and creepers returned to their previous state. Not a trace of the forest fire remained. Observing this, everyone said in amazement, "We talked just like madmen. Where is that fire?"

In the evening light, the son of the king of Vrndavana looked very elegant as He entered the town with His cowherd friends. Kṛṣṇa, the glory of His family, is filled with boundless bliss and always absorbed in exciting pastimes. He is a nectar shower of mercy, and the essence of all good fortune who teaches the laws of love to His devotees. The people of Vrndavana surrounded Kṛṣṇa and took great pleasure in praising Him with the prayers of Gargacarya. Pangs of separation overcame the Vraja *gopis* while waiting for Kṛṣṇa to return. Although they spent the night like women far from their homes, when they saw Kṛṣṇa coming they again overflowed with love.

Chapter Ten: The Purva-raga of the Gopis

The minds of the young *gopis* of Vrndavana transformed due to their rising desire to enjoy intimately with Kṛṣṇa. Many impediments prevented their meeting, but the chariots of the *gopis*' minds always carried them to thoughts of Kṛṣṇa. Because of their strong attraction for Kṛṣṇa they could hardly think or act correctly. Cupid had seized control of their hearts and confounded their minds. They tried their best to hide their feelings, and by discussing among themselves they attempted to relieve the anxiety caused by the pangs of love.

One *gopi* named Candravali, anxious and overcome by intense love, spoke to her confidant Padma, whose elegance defeats the beauty of a lotus. “O golden-one! Listen my dear *sakhi*! My heart is totally attached to Syamasundara. My superiors are heavily criticizing me for this and my sister-in-law is poisoning others by speaking ill of me, but I cannot give up my attraction to Him.”

Padma replied, “O lotus-eyed one! You should know that the fresh love of the daughter of Vrsabhanu surpasses all of us. But as yet She has not met alone with Kṛṣṇa. Before She consorts with Kṛṣṇa, you should fulfill your heart's desire by associating with Him first. Once Syamasundara enjoys with you, He will forget all about Her. Come now and I will make all arrangements for your love tryst. When Radha and Syama met that night beside the lake everyone understood the superexcellent position of Their confidential love. But my dear friend, you should know that Kṛṣṇa's love has no beginning and no end.” Thus Padma, who is expert in fulfilling the cherished desires of Candravali, encouraged her and made the necessary arrangements for her to meet Syamasundara.

Meanwhile, Radhika sat in a secluded place with Her dear *sakhis* Lalita and Visakha. The immeasurable weight of Her love for Kṛṣṇa overpowered Her. While Radhika remained in a lonely place, Syama-sakhi, who is pure and faultless, and Bakula-mala sakhi arrived carrying a *bakula* garland.

Syama-sakhi said, “O darling of Vrsabhanu! You are the *tilaka* on the head of all the Vraja *gopis* and the crest-jewel of all beautiful girls. Who is more fortunate than You? Verily, among all living entities, You are the

personification of love. What to speak of all living entities, You attract even the heart of Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean of wealth and good fortune. That night on the banks of the Yamuna after the Kaliya pastime convinced me that Kṛṣṇa was madly in love with You.

“He pleased everyone and filled the *gopis* with *rasa*. His enticing form acted like an elephant goad pulling the hearts of the *gopis* hankering to taste His love. Like a *cakora* bird relishing the rays of the moon, He drank the nectar dripping from Your moon-like face with His sidelong glances. As far as I am concerned, You are certainly the only object of His love. Seeing Your mutual love my distress is now gone, and my heart is inundated with waves of bliss.”

Radhika replied, “O bold one! Why are you exaggerating so much? Hey *sakhi*! Where is that housewife in Gokula who has not accepted Kaliya-damana (Kṛṣṇa) as her only object of love? *Kumuda* flowers open without the moon, but lilies need the moon’s tender touch to blossom into sweetness. Therefore You should know that Syamasundara is the only sweetheart for all the gorgeous girls in Vrndavana. He does not belong to any one *sakhi*!”

Syama-sakhi said, “Do not doubt my words and thereby inflict pain upon Yourself. Be satisfied with Your unique good fortune and be convinced that Syamasundara belongs only to You.”

Lalita said, “Syame! Are you speaking just to console Radha, or do you really mean what you say?”

Syama-sakhi replied, “O Lalite! Why don’t you ask my friend Bakula-mala?”

Lalita said, “O my dear *sakhi* Bakula-mala! Tell the truth. Do not say something just to please me.”

Bakula-mala said, “Hey Radhe! Radhe! This Bakula-mala herself will dispel Your doubts. Just hearing my words will give pleasure to Your ears. This morning that handsome boy passed by me on His way to tend the cows on Govardhana Hill, the source of happiness. For sometime Kṛṣṇa played joyfully with His intimate companions.

“Then He went for a walk with Madhumangala and entered a forest of *bakula* trees. Kṛṣṇa appeared like an ocean of bliss meandering amongst the

bakula trees, which were laden with blossoming flowers. Kṛṣṇa and his friend Kusumasava sat down and strung a garland of delicate *bakula* flowers. That *bakula* garland glowed brightly and emitted an extremely sweet fragrance. Feeling very shy and afraid that someone might see me, I hid behind some forest creepers and watched Him for a long time.

“At that time I heard Kusumasava, who was holding the pet parrot of Radhika on his hand, describing to Kṛṣṇa about how Radha looks at Him with loving eyes. He told Kṛṣṇa that when He goes out behind the cows, Radhika stands in the watchtower of Her palace and gazes upon Him with great longing. During His birthday festival Radhika spent the whole time simply looking at Him. Radhika stared at Kṛṣṇa with totally fixed attention the day He subdued Kaliya.

“Hey Radhe! Listen to the other sweet words that Kusumasava spoke. Although his speaking seemed irrelevant, he said, ‘O my dear friend! The garland that You made is very special and You should use it to win the heart of Radhika. May it swing around Her neck and enhance Her beauty.’ Kṛṣṇa smiled while replying, ‘How will this ever happen? Your statements are as illusory as the will-o’-the wisp.’ Kusumasava reacted to cover up his statements. At first he did not respond but just stood there silently like a picture.

“Just then, Padma-sakhi arrived there like an untimely storm and stood next to Kṛṣṇa. Carrying the passenger of intense anxiety, the chariot of my mind ran away. But since I was only a short distance away, I overheard everything that Kusumasava said to Padma. He said, ‘*Are sakhi!* What are you doing here? You appear like the crest-jewel of cunning persons. What brought you to this lonely forest grove? Abandoning all shyness, you stand fearlessly in front of my friend Syamasundara who always tastes varieties of *rasas*.’

“Then full of pretension, Padma put a proposal before Kṛṣṇa saying, ‘Listen beautiful one! My name is Padma and I am an intimate friend of Candravali-sakhi. She sent me here to pick flowers for the worship of Mother Gauri (wife of Lord Siva), the pure one. The particular flowers required for her *puja* only available only in this grove of Yours. Hence, I have come here in order to pick these *bakula* flowers.’

“Kusumasava replied, ‘It is well known that Gauri (Candravali) is attached to worshipping Gauri-devi (Durga), who is pleased by faith and love. Why didn’t Candravali come herself to pick flowers for her *puja*?’

“Padma said, ‘O bold one! You are correct. But Candravali got bitten the first time she saw that poisonous black snake named Kṛṣṇa standing by the bank of the Yamuna. The poison of His love now sears her tender heart.’

“Kusumasava said, ‘The only remedy to counteract that poison is to stop thinking about that snake.’

“Padma said, ‘I am searching for the means to distract her mind.’

“Kusumasava said, ‘It is very difficult to find such a means. Due to its cowardly nature, a mind fearful of a snake can never give up its fear. Similarly, when one’s mind becomes completely attached to Kṛṣṇa it cannot go anywhere else.’

“Padma replied, ‘Nothing is impossible for one who is full of anxiety. Where there is mind, there must be anxiety. When one loses his mind, however, naturally he gives up all his anxiety. When that anxiety disappears then it can no longer dominate him. Becoming enchanted by a beautiful object can also steal away the mind. Indeed, that anxiety is amazing!’

“Kusumasava said, ‘Go and look for that one who steals the mind (Manohara—Kṛṣṇa)!’

“Padma said, ‘At present your *bakula-mala* is that *manohara*. But that *bakula-mala* should decorate the neck of Gauri (name for Durga or Candravali).’

“Syamasundara said, ‘Hey my friend Varsa! This *sakhi* seems to be very clever. She wants to decorate the neck of Gauri with My *bakula-mala*. But she is not allowing Me to finish the garland.’

“Kusumasava said, ‘O bold one! Your *bakula* garland is meant for our dear friends. Who else could be qualified to receive it? Therefore *sakhi*, why not just pick up the *bakula* flowers lying on the ground and take those with you?’

“Padma replied, ‘How can I even dare to do that? Why are you depriving me in this way? If the prince of Vrndavana is inclined, He will personally give us some flowers.’

“Kṛṣṇa said to Kusumasava, ‘What she said is perfectly correct. So you should give her some flowers in order to satisfy her *sakhi* and to perform the worship of Gauri.’ Then Padma, feeling overwhelmed in joy, took some *bakula* flowers and left.”

Bakula-mala continued to narrate Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes to Radhika, “Hey Radhe! I overheard Kusumasava say, ‘O my friend Kṛṣṇa! If among the young *sakhis* like Padma and others, a *sakhi* of Radha’s party comes here she could mitigate the pain in your heart. Then Your *bakula-mala* will have meaning.’

“After hearing this I moved closer to them on the pretext of collecting fallen flowers. Yet I acted in such a way that they could not tell I was listening to them. Seeing me, Kusumasava said, ‘Hey *sakhi*! Who are you?’ Immediately after saying this, the parrot perched on his hand said, ‘Aho, look! Here is Bakula-mala, the associate of Syama-sakhi who is a friend of Radhika. She is picking up *bakula* flowers to make a garland.’

“Kusumasava said, ‘What need is there of a garland? When the shameless young girls of Gokula can create *bakula* flowers and agitate everyone just by their sidelong glances.’

“The parrot said, ‘Now that you have this garland of *bakula* flowers you should give it to Syama-sakhi’s maidservant who in turn will give it to my deserving mistress Radhika.’

“Kusumasava said, ‘Syamasundara! Just see, my words are coming true.’ And the parrot replied, ‘A *brahmana*’s words are infallible. You should give this *bakula* garland to Bakula sakhi and she will give it to Radhika.’

“Then Kṛṣṇa, the destroyer of demons, smiled gently and spoke just according to the time and circumstance, ‘The young girls of Vrndavana are naturally proud. Why should they come here on the orders of Batu (nickname for Kusumasava or Madhumangala) who is simply a *brahmana* entertaining everyone with his jokes and silly behavior? Therefore, O best among the birds! In order to comfort your mistress, why don’t you fly to her. Hearing your pure, soft, and sweet request, that Bakula sakhi will accept your *bakula* garland.’

“Immediately that best of the birds flew to me and said, ‘O Bakula-mala! Do you recognize me? Why are you picking *bakula* flowers? Why not come

see the prince of Vrndavana? I will give you the garland that Syamasundara has made Himself, so you need not toil so hard picking flowers.’

“I replied to that parrot, O best of the parrots! The scriptures are right when they say that one’s good and bad qualities depend on his association. It appears that associating with a person who is wanton by nature, dresses in yellow garments, and is intoxicated from drinking *madira-rasa* has bewildered your intelligence. Tell me, do you think that any chaste girl will accept a garland from someone who is not her husband?

“The parrot said, ‘Hey listen! He is the supreme person, not just an ordinary person. His lotus feet are very difficult to attain.’ (Inner meaning of parrot’s statements: ‘So why don’t you try to meet Kṛṣṇa?’)

“I replied *Are!* Wait a minute! I can see He is just a man. Why are you calling Him the supreme person? Do not try to attract me to Kṛṣṇa by your word jugglery.”

Bakula-mala continued speaking to Radhika, “The parrot told me that if I understood his words I should take the garland. Since the parrot defeated me, I could not take the dominant role. So I returned to Kṛṣṇa who wears *makara-kundala*. Then the mild and sweet *brahmana* named Kusumasava talked to his dear friend the parrot.

“After their argument ended Kusumasava said, ‘This *sakhi* named Bakula-mala should take this *bakula* garland to the mistress of the parrot. Even Laksmi-devi, who has sweet-smelling hands, can rarely obtain such a garland. This *bakula* garland should be taken to Radhika, the eternal lover of Kṛṣṇa. By doing this Bakula-sakhi will attain success in accomplishing her task. This Bakula sakhi, who is the personification of Kṛṣṇa’s sweet love, is expert in this work.’

“At that moment Damodara slightly trembled as He raised His soft, lotus palm, moistened with perspiration. While looking in the opposite direction a sweet nectarean smile appeared on His face. Then He gently touched my hand as He gave me the garland. I returned to my mistress Syama-sakhi and presented this garland which embodies the fragrance of Kṛṣṇa’s pure love for You. I told her all the details of my meeting with Kṛṣṇa, and how this garland conveyed His heartfelt desire to meet You. And now my mistress has brought that garland to You.”

Then Syama-sakhi adorned Radha's neck with the *bakula* garland. Radhika felt the thrilling touch of Her beloved by contacting the garland made by Syamasundara's hands. As a result, Radha's body surged with ecstatic symptoms and Her cheeks swelled with delight. Feeling the rising of love, Radhika's eyes moistened with tears as She looked slightly downward out of shyness. A mild nectarean smile bathed Her gentle lips, which defeated the tenderness of fresh sprouts. Overwhelmed by insurmountable ecstasy, Radharani embraced Bakula-sakhi and fell unconscious.

Lalita-sakhi said, "Hey Syame! It is not only in name, but also in fame and quality that your *sakhi* Bakula-mala and this *bakula* garland are the same. Can't you see that both these *bakula-malas* are fragrant and freshly youthful? They both enjoyed the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus hands and got to decorate the neck of our Swamini Radhika."

Syama-sakhi replied, "You have spoken very sweetly."

Nanda Maharaja Visits King Vrsabhanu

Once upon a time, the illustrious and powerful King Vrsabhanu met with his ministers to discuss inviting Vrajaraja Nanda and his family for a visit. With all intelligence Vrsabhanu Maharaja submissively upheld the family traditions, and executed them in a wonderful beautiful way. He desired to celebrate the festival in grand style, and He wanted Radhika, the embodiment of the art of cooking, to prepare Her finest dishes.

He sent a nursemaid's daughter named Sucarita, who possessed good character and auspicious qualities, to convey his plan to Radha. Coming before Radha, Sucarita said, "Your parents want You to prepare a grand feast for the upcoming visit of the king of Vrndavana. I will not leave here until I see You depart for Your father's palace." As the *sakhis* happily worship Radhika, She fills them with joy in return.

Sucarita also addressed the other *sakhis* attending Radhika, "Listen Syame! Radha's father wants you to give up your pretension of laziness and help the other *sakhis*. It will be good for you to uphold the etiquette of family traditions. O Visakhe! You should also bring your friend Lalita who always exhibits a playful nature."

Smiling, Lalita replied to Sucarita, "O auspicious one! Why are we suddenly invited to a festival?"

Sucarita replied, “It is not a surprise event. When the king of Vrndavana celebrated Kṛṣṇa’s birthday he invited everyone to participate. After attending this *mahotsava*, King Vrsabhanu got the idea to hold a similar festival in his palace. So naturally he thought to invite the king of the cowherd men who possesses pure consciousness. After riding in the chariot of the mind for long time, this joyful festival is about to be held. It will definitely be an ecstatic event.”

Syama-sakhi said, “O one who excels all in good qualities! No doubt it will be a wonderful festival. Who will not enjoy great bliss by attending this rewarding festival? We must immediately start preparing, since this is the order of Radha’s father.”

Then all the *gopis* went to the magnificent palace of King Vrsabhanu. It seemed that the embodiment of all joyous festivals had manifested there. King Vrsabhanu welcomed the *sakhis*, “Are you all feeling happy?” After Radhika paid obeisances, He smelled Her head and said, “O auspicious one! Please use all Your cooking skills to make very delicious and tempting preparations. Surely Your lotus hands will attain perfection by cooking this feast. Tomorrow the king of the cowherd men, his wife, family, and Kṛṣṇa and Balarama will take their meal here.”

Lalita said, “O father! Have you collected all the necessary ingredients?”

King Vrsabhanu replied, “Not just today, but for many days we have been arranging for this *mahotsava*. For a long time I have been eager to observe this. Now all the ingredients have been procured in unlimited amounts. You cannot see the end of them. Enter the storeroom and see for yourself. Please consider if all the proper divine articles and items have been assembled. If the best of anything remains to be collected, then please tell me and I will immediately get it.”

All the effulgent, slender-waisted *sakhis* like Lalita, Visakha, and others expert in the art of cooking met and joyfully entered the enchanting kitchen. After paying obeisances to Mother Kirtida the *sakhis* inspected the ingredients.

Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa returned from the forest with the cows. Seeing her approaching son, Mother Yasoda, who is glorified by all the demigods like Lord Siva and Brahma, anxiously desired to speak to Him. In a lovable,

unpretentious way Kṛṣṇa cast fresh, sidelong glances to reciprocate with each one of His friends. He walked with the gait of a lordly elephant in rut.

Yasoda said in a sweet voice, “O Vatsa! The honorable King Vrsabhanu, who is opulent with the wealth of many bulls, desires to host You tomorrow at his palace. After consulting his ministers and associates he sent an invitation. My darling, You should go there tomorrow to reciprocate with his loving request. Your friends will stay back to tend the cows. So tomorrow You need not go to the forest.”

Kṛṣṇa, the ocean of compassion, said, “How is it possible for Me to go alone and eat without My friends? What is the use of such an invitation.” Yasoda, who fully knows the laws of social etiquette, replied, “Do not be distressed in Your mind. If You cannot give up Your attachment to Your friends, then just stay home with them.”

After she said this, Kṛṣṇa, who removes the distress of everyone in the universe, forgot about going to the forest. Contemplating the upcoming festival, Kṛṣṇa remembered the sweet name, form, and qualities of Radhika. As Kṛṣṇa fixed His mind on Radhika, His affection for Radha increased more and more. Then Kṛṣṇa meditated on all the wonderful preparations that Radha would make on the order of Her father.

On the day of the *mahotsava* King Vrsabhanu beamed happily like the rays of the rising sun. Vrajesvari Yasoda received a warm greeting upon arriving in Varsana. After offering obeisances to the queen of Vrndavana, the younger ladies of the house glorified her, “Please listen attentively as we recount how Kirtida-devi (Radhika’s mother) praised you. She said, ‘Even Sarasvati cannot properly describe the wonderful nature of the creeper of mother Yasoda’s parental love. Then how can I possibly glorify her? As a devotee of Lord Hari can remove the miseries of material existence, similarly, Yasoda’s visit to our house will remove all inauspiciousness. Rohini-devi and her all-auspicious family members will be also welcomed into our house. I hope they will be kind and bestow their compassion on me. Tell them that they need not bathe at home, but they can quickly come here and do all their bathing in our palace.’”

Vrajesvari Yasoda affectionately addressed them, “O ladies! You have conquered us with your humble praises. You need not treat us so

respectfully or worry about us because we can take care of ourselves.”

King Vrsabhanu had collected beautiful paraphernalia from all directions in order to offer a royal reception to Maharaja Nanda, the king of the cowherd men. Lavish decorations beautified the entire city of Varsana. Beginning from the city gate, gorgeous ornaments adorned the entire royal road. Strings of sweetly jingling bells hung over the roadway. Auspicious water pots lined the sides of the road. Coconuts set on mango leaves rested above shiny brass pots. Rows of decorated lamps accented the atmosphere. Being nicely swept and cleansed, the main road appeared free from dirt and dust. The densely foliated branches of the dark green banana trees prevented the sun’s rays from shining on the path. Kettledrums and *mrdangas* resounded melodiously in glorification. They created a festive atmosphere to greet the party of Nanda Maharaja.

After making all the arrangements Vrsabhanu Maharaja petitioned Surya-deva, his worshipable deity, to make his endeavors successful. Then he went to the path beside the main road and waited expectantly for the arrival of his guests. Rows of fruit-bearing *betel* trees lined both sides of the lane on which Vrsabhanu stood. First he saw the attractive young prince of Vrndavana strolling before His relatives. Surrounded by His friends, Kṛṣṇa illuminated the world with the brilliant effulgence coming from His lightning hued *dhoti*. The *gopis* cherishing paramour love for Kṛṣṇa strongly desired to embrace His lotus feet that now graced the earth of Varsana. Thus Kṛṣṇa, the personification of *srngara rasa*, entered the vision of the eager King Vrsabhanu.

Other family members such as the queen of Vrndavana, who is totally free from all faults and falsity, walked behind Kṛṣṇa. Nanda Maharaja, who brings joy to the earth like a veritable manifestation of all good fortune, and his associates followed behind. Seeing them, Vrsabhanu Maharaja rushed forward to warmly embrace Kṛṣṇa, the moon of Gokula who has attractive curly, dark blue hair. After bending his head slightly to show respect to the king and queen of Vrndavana, Vrsabhanu led them to his palace.

Upon entering the palace, King Vrsabhanu expertly arranged sitting places for his guests according to their position. He provided for all their comforts by engaging his servants in carefully and respectfully bathing, massaging,

and dressing them. Everyone felt happy and refreshed from the fatigue of the journey after the warm reception.

Yasoda entered the kitchen to check on Radhika. Appearing in Vrndavana as personified bliss, Radhika made a wonderful feast with Her expert cooking and tasteful arrangements. Seeing mother Yasoda entering the kitchen, Radhika offered her respectful obeisances. Yasoda, the bearer of beauty and fame for her family, felt boundless affection for Radhika.

Smiling joyfully, Yasoda said, “The art of cooking is like the jewel in the ornament of praise for the female class. Even though Your beautiful body is as delicate as a flower, You have taken on this heavy burden of cooking. And by doing so Your elegance has enhanced.” Although Radhika had worked very hard, She did not feel the least bit tired. When requested by Yasoda, Radhika felt shy about displaying all the items that She had prepared.

Mother Yasoda said, “Just see what amazing delicacies You have made. One can easily perceive all Your good qualities of taste, beauty, and fragrance in these astonishing preparations. Your perfect cooking has turned everything into ambrosia.” Then giving Radha a full embrace, Yasoda congratulated Her saying, “Darling, bravo! I really appreciate Your expertise in cooking. Seeing Your skill has removed whatever unhappiness I felt within myself.”

Her face glowing like the full moon, Yasoda continued her joyful mood. She embraced the fragrant youthful Lalita and Syama-sakhi and praised them saying, “O Lalite! O Syame! O Visakhe! Your friendly dealings with each other, and your respectful attitude toward your superiors is certainly commendable. For this is the standard of behavior of cultured people.”

After glorifying Radhika, who is expert in all arts, and Her girlfriends, Yasoda turned to Rohini-devi and said, “O mother of Balabhadra! Learned persons always honor such mutual loving affection. This Radhika, who is delicate and tender by nature, has filled my heart with ecstasy. She appears in this world like an auspicious flower from Nanda-kanana, or a beautiful creeper of sandalwood. Radhika is the ripened fruit of the tree of Vrsabhanu’s piety. Radhika is a rare jewel-mine of the best qualities found in the three worlds.”

Rohini replied, “O Yasoda! Everything you said is perfectly correct. There is no doubt about it. Moreover, the delightful son of the lord of Vrndavana is an ocean of good qualities and Radhika is Sumukhi, sweetness personified. O Yasoda, this pair of jewels is the central ornament on the neck of the goddess of Vrndavana. They give pleasure to anyone who sees or hears about Them.”

Feeling bashful over hearing Her praises, Radhika gently lowered Her head in shyness. From observing Radhika’s facial expressions, Syama-sakhi and the other *gopis* detected the joy swirling within Her heart. They smiled slightly in understanding and thought within themselves, “O Rohini-devi! Your statements disclose our inner thoughts. Truly you are blessed. Without a doubt rain gives cooling relief to one tortured by scorching sunshine. There is a deeper more satisfying meaning to your statement that Radhika and Syama-sakhi are the jewels on the neck of the goddess of Vrndavana. Everyone holds this pair of jewels on their heads. Do you not feel repentant about engaging this delicate girl in such difficult work?”

As the sun lights up the entire universe, similarly, with her pure consciousness Kirtida illuminates her family and increases their fame. After embracing her, Yasoda said, “O Kirtida! Why did you engage the youthful Radhika in the toilsome duty of cooking, which is usually done by the elderly housewives? You should not have caused such distress to the fresh flower-like body of Radhika, who has wilted from the heat of the cooking fires. Don’t you feel repentant over this?”

Kirtida replied, “O Vrajesvari! Indeed, I took a risk by engaging Radhika in that work. But the fact is that Radhika is an expert cook. And besides, this particular festival we are hosting will fill everyone with delight. The munificent king of the cowherd men, his wife, and children will all enjoy a wonderful feast here today. Actually Radhika, who possesses brilliant intelligence, willfully engaged Herself in this service with great happiness and enthusiasm.

“Moreover Radhika has a natural ability in Her hand so that whatever She cooks exhibits the best qualities of taste, beauty, and fragrance. O you who have such strong affection for Radhika! Being eager to please his guests, Radha’s father humorously asked Her to help. The majority of the feast preparations are being made in another big kitchen. In this kitchen Radhika

is cooking only a few especially delectable items. Is there anyone in Vrndavana not considering himself blessed today? But since you are the most worshipable lady in Vrndavana, I think you should take charge here. If that will make you happy, then I am sure all the problems with the festival will be solved.”

Vrajesvari Yasoda replied, “Let Rohini, who is famous for her expertise in serving, distribute all the food items lovingly cooked by Radhika.”

Before Yasoda could finish speaking, Kirtida interjected, “Wait! Let my darling Radhika serve the King and Queen of Vrndavana, along with their sons Kṛṣṇa and Balarama who are like a pair of fresh blue and white lotuses. Radhika should also serve Rohini, the personified jewel of all good qualities. The intimate friends of Radhika such as Lalita and Syama-sakhi, who are also experienced servers, should distribute food to Kṛṣṇa’s friends.”

Although this order filled Radhika’s ears with nectar, it created a dilemma due to the rising waves of love within Her heart. Radharani could not accept the proposal, but at the same time She did not want to refuse the request. Inertia overtook Radhika’s mind. As the gentle, sweet smile slowly disappeared from Her tender sprout-like lips, Radhika bashfully confided in her mother.

Radhika said, “I am feeling overwhelmed with feelings of shyness and reluctance. Therefore, I will only serve the divine queen of Vrndavana, who is the embodiment of absolute fortune, and her family members privately in the inner chambers. Let Syama-sakhi serve a line of guests sitting on the outer veranda.”

Syama-sakhi, a clever expert in juggling words, said, “O doe-eyed one! Your statements are unreasonable. Let Your father Vrsabhanu, who is as powerful as the sun, more famous than Lord Siva and the purifier of the fallen, serve the guests sitting on veranda.”

After listening to the sweet talks of these *sakhis* whose pleasing voices sounded like the warbling of swans, Yasoda, the reservoir of parental affection, said, “O my two well-behaved girls! Do not be afraid, but listen to my words and you will benefit. Following my suggestion, you should

learn the proper method of serving. Now both of you become proficient in this art.”

After giving this instruction, mother Yasoda, who is pure and famous, walked out on the huge, gem-studded veranda. She ordered her servants to properly arrange the wooden seats. They fixed fine white covers on the seats and made all comfortable arrangements.

Then Haladhara, the brother of Kṛṣṇa, who subdues the demons and whose bright complexion outshines the purest crystal, sat on the right side of Nanda Maharaja. Kṛṣṇa, whose body is more brilliant than a blue sapphire, sat on his left. The *brahmana* boy Batu, who is an expert joker with a very strong and beautiful neck, sat next to Kṛṣṇa. Subala, who is strong, wealthy, and full of deep affection for Kṛṣṇa and the other *sakhas*, sat beside Batu.

The respectable and handsome Nanda Maharaja, the main cause Gokula’s wealth, cleansed his feet and sat down. Everyone in the assembly drowned in joy upon seeing beam a pleasant smile. Radhika, the goddess of personified beauty, came before the honorable King of Vrndavana and respectfully offered him lotus flowers in Her folded palms. Then Yasoda summoned Radhika to serve the foodstuffs. With a heart full of joy Radhika served Nanda Maharaja while Syama-sakhi served Kṛṣṇa and Balarama.

Noticing that Radhika was not serving Kṛṣṇa, Yasoda told Her, “Without Your help Syama-sakhi will not be able to serve properly. Why don’t You help her serve Kṛṣṇa.” Although eager to do this, Radhika tried to restrain Her restless heart. Soon, however, a bad star appeared to destroy Her restraint and remove Her fickle modesty. Radharani’s mind is completely saturated with a mood of eternal love and Her blissful form brightens the world with a wonderful effulgence. Although Her hand trembled due to fear, Radhika controlled it and served Kṛṣṇa. On the order of Vrajesvari, Radhika and Syama-sakhi served Kṛṣṇa and His friends like Subala and Kusumasava.

“O look!” boasted Kusumasava, “Although I am the best among the *brahmanas*, still I have become sanctified by honoring this food which has been personally served by the hand of the daughter of Vrsabhanu. Do you know why this is true? Radhika is Maha Laksmi-devi Herself. Is there any woman in the world equal to Her? Hey Kṛṣṇa, my self-effulgent friend!

After relishing the food cooked by Radhika, we no longer want to eat food cooked by anyone else.”

While Radhika served the food with great dexterity and devotion, Kusumasava continued to laugh and make jokes. Speaking in varying tones, he sometimes spoke quickly and then very slowly. With his funny talks and antics, he entertained the entire assembly.

Pretending to be angry, Kṛṣṇa addressed Kusumasava, “Hey Vacal! (talkative one) Take your meal and stop your mocking and joking. Do not create such pandemonium. Besides what is the use of all your silly talks?”

Kusumasava replied, “Accepting Your instruction, am I supposed to become like a dumb man and just eat silently? Even if I had a hundred mouths, I could not properly glorify the superb quality of this food. It’s taste is just beyond my imagination to explain.”

While eating Kṛṣṇa gave some food to a parrot that sat between He and Kusumasava. The parrot accepted the offerings with great happiness. Feeling grateful, he extended his neck and looked restlessly here and there as if preparing to speak. Observing the actions of the parrot, Yasoda said, “O best among the *dvijas* (*brahmanas* or birds)! Speak out whatever is on your mind.”

The *brahmana* Batu (Kusumasava) immediately replied in a loud voice, “O just see! Today I have become the best of the twice born.”

Yasoda replied, “I am not speaking to you. I am addressing the parrot.”

The parrot said, “O son of the twice-born (Batu)! Do not show off your word jugglery. You seem to be more crazy and talkative than I am. Do not spoil Kṛṣṇa’s happy mood by speaking any more nonsense.”

Vrajaraja Nanda said, “From where has this wise bird come? Why did this parrot become morose upon hearing the glories of Laksmi-devi and Radhika?”

Yasoda said, “Just listen to the history of this parrot. It is not fitting to compare Radhika with one of the demigods.”

The parrot said, “Why didn’t you give a suitable reply on my behalf?”

After hearing these talks, Radhika and Syama-sakhi met in the kitchen, removed the veils from their heads, and started joking and laughing.

Radhika said, “O Syame! One with a beautiful face! These two twice-borns (Batu and the parrot) are engaged in some nonsense talk about Me. So now you continue serving by yourself.” After saying this Radhika remained in the kitchen.

Not seeing Radha, Yasoda thought, “Perhaps Radhika became shy upon hearing the parrot glorify Her, so She stopped serving.” Yasoda then went to encourage Radhika. Accepting her proposal, Radha served again but in another part of the room. Noticing this, Yasoda approached Radhika and said, “It is natural for a cultured girl to feel shy upon hearing her own glories. But my darling, You are not the daughter of Vrsabhanu, but You are the daughter of the ocean. O sweet-faced one! You should serve the same line You did before.” Surrendering to mother Yasoda, Radhika continued serving Kṛṣṇa and His friends.

Besides enjoying the meal, Nanda Maharaja especially appreciated the cooking expertise of Radhika. Fully satisfied, he laughed and joked with great joy. With great gusto he relished the six kinds of tastes which Radha had presented in a pleasing way. He gave the utmost praise to Radhika for cooking so perfectly. Balarama and His friends felt full satisfaction. Kṛṣṇa experienced exceptional flavors while eating the food cooked and served by Radhika. Since all the preparations contained the fragrance of Her conjugal love, Kṛṣṇa savored the sweet *madhurya-rasa* of Radhika’s heart with every bite.

Vrsabhanu concluded the festive occasion by joyfully distributing *tambula*, valuable ornaments, garlands, and sandalwood pulp to all the guests. Radhika enthusiastically served the mothers of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama, who displayed sublime gravity and kindness, as many sweets as they desired. While relishing the sweets and delighting in Radhika’s service mood, the two mothers conversed among themselves.

Yasoda said, “That expert talker Batu spoke correctly when he said, ‘O friend! After eating food cooked by this server you will not want to eat anyone else’s cooking.’ ”

Then Yasoda addressed Radhika, “Hey Vrsabhanunandini! Your preparations give complete satisfaction. From now on my dear son Kṛṣṇa must only eat food cooked by Your hands. He will no longer accept any

meal cooked by another. So in very sweet words I will seek permission from Your elders, and definitely they will allow You to cook for my son. For doing this service I will reward You with opulent dresses and ornaments. From now You must come to my house and prepare all of Kṛṣṇa's meals with a joyful heart."

On hearing Yasoda's statement, Kirtida (Radhika's mother) said, "O Vrajesvari Yasoda! You are the Queen of our lives. Your order has greatly enhanced the beauty, love and affection of Radhika. Those who know the workings of love will be pleased by your request. Everyday Radhika will come and skillfully cook for your son. As soon as the sun rises She will go to your house. By your mercy the kingdom of Vrndavana now shines with transcendental glory and stands beyond the effects of time. Your pleasure alone is our ultimate goal."

After receiving the consent of Her elders, Radhika could now freely associate with Her beloved from that day on. As Kṛṣṇa continued to relish the nectarean foods cooked by Her hands, Radhika's desire to offer Him the sweet nectar of Her lips increased day by day.

Meanwhile, another *sakhi* named Candravali had tied up Gokulacandra (Kṛṣṇa) in the prison house of her heart like a thief. Whenever Kṛṣṇa and Candravali met, They looked immensely beautiful. At that time the heart of Candravali, which possesses the wealth of supreme beauty, would melt in anticipation. For she hankered always to be pierced by the arrow of Kṛṣṇa's love. All the *gopis* headed by Candravali were like flowers of love emanating the highly praiseworthy fragrance of the joy of meeting Kṛṣṇa. In assessing the stage of their budding love, one could understand that within a year their love would flourish and clearly express itself.

Sometime later, on the pretext of picking flowers, the Vraja *gopis* met their beloved Kṛṣṇa in a lonely garden decorated with fresh, untouched creepers and enjoyed intimate pastimes with Him. Kṛṣṇa, who is more beautiful than a fresh rain cloud, is the totally independent well-wisher of everyone. He is the sole object of love for the *gopis* and all the other Vrajavasis devoid of envy.

Now the Vraja *gopis* freely displayed their love without any pretension. Because their superiors did not practice fault finding the young girls of

Gokula did not fear criticism. Since their birth, the Vraja *gopis* had an overflowing loving attraction for Kṛṣṇa. They no longer felt any need to hide their feelings. Fully exhibiting their frivolous moods, the *gopis* delighted in forest pastimes with their beloved. Discarding all inhibitions, they completely fulfilled their heart's desires.

The husbands of the *gopis* observed all the proper rules of social etiquette, but for some reason they did not prevent their wives from running to the forest. Just see the wonderful workings of Yogamaya who made all the necessary arrangements to nourish the *rasa* of these eternally perfect lovers of Kṛṣṇa. But surprisingly enough, under the influence of the same Yogamaya potency the *gopis* felt extremely anxious and apprehensive about their illicit love for Kṛṣṇa. They thought, “We *gopis* are married to other men, therefore we are *parakiya* or belonging to others.”

Besides creating such thoughts within the *gopis*, Yogamaya arranged that their secret meetings with Kṛṣṇa remained hidden from their superiors. How did she accomplish this? The fathers-and mothers-in-law and the husbands of the *gopis* thought of themselves as their superiors and protectors. For those having this false pride, Yogamaya arranged for a *mayic* expansion or duplicate of each *gopi* to remain home beside her husband, while the original spiritual body of that *gopi* went out to meet Kṛṣṇa.

Yogamaya performed these tasks perfectly. On the other hand, to pacify Kṛṣṇa's parents Yogamaya made a completely different arrangement. Kṛṣṇa, whose character is praised by even Brahma and Siva, is famous for His elegance and ability to control Cupid. Although these qualities usually disappear as a boy matures, tender beauty and impudent behavior mingled within Kṛṣṇa's youthful form. Due to this, Nanda and Yasoda who were tied to Him by the creeper of parental affection, thought that Kṛṣṇa would remain perpetually as their little boy.

Despite their thinking, Kṛṣṇa soon blossomed into manhood. At this time the *gopis* saw Kṛṣṇa as a handsome most lovable young man, but His parents continued to see Him as their darling son. As a result, Nanda and Yasoda did not feel any suspicion when Kṛṣṇa met secretly with the lovelorn, lotus-eyed *gopis*. To satisfy the Lord's desire to relish *parakiya bhava*, Yogamaya also arranged for the *gopis* to maintain the consciousness

of identifying as other men's wives. Just see the amazing power of Kṛṣṇa's Yogamaya potency!

Chapter Eleven: Pastimes in Summer and Other Seasons

The arrival of the summer season brought a suitable time for Kṛṣṇa to relish refreshing pastimes with Sri Radha. But when Kṛṣṇa played with Balarama and the cowherd boys at this time, He felt the scorching heat of summer manifesting within Himself as the burning pain of separation from Radhika. Before telling the next pastime, I will describe the summer season in Vrndavana.

During the summer, the pathways become hard and dry from the blistering heat of the sun. A person's fingernails become brittle and crack. But inside the caves of Govardhana, where Kṛṣṇa secretly enjoys with His beloveds, there is always a soothing and cooling atmosphere due to its natural springs and small ponds of water. The waves of the Yamuna meander lazily by her blistering banks of sand. People also move slowly due to the heat. Profuse perspiration brings relief from the sizzling sunrays. Everyone forgets the discomfort of perspiring by smelling the pleasing fragrance of *sirisa* flowers. The tops of the trees hang down to form natural canopies, which shade the footpaths and kindly protect the Vrajavasis from the pinching rays of the sun.

In Vrndavana's cool shady groves the *vanadevis* (forest maidens) are busy making delightful arrangements for Radha-Kṛṣṇa's confidential pastimes. Scattered here and there are various *kunjas* (natural cottages) made of groups of lush bushes, trees, and vines that have entrance doors on one side. The *vanadevis* keep a variety of pleasurable substances such as *pan*, *candana*, and pots of cool sandal-scented water inside the *kunjas*.. There are also containers of refreshing drinks like *madhu* and mango nectar waiting to satisfy the Divine Couple and relieve Their fatigue.

The Killing of Pralambasura

One summer day the brilliantly powerful brothers Kṛṣṇa and Balarama, surrounded by Their associates and displaying wonderful grace and beauty, came to Bhandiravana forest to enjoy pastimes. The moment the Lord desired to enjoy a particular pastime, all the necessary paraphernalia

automatically appeared. Nourished by eating the fresh green grass and satisfied by drinking the crystal clear water from the valleys of Giri-Govardhana, the cows relaxed peacefully in the dense shade of the *banyan* trees. The *gopas* wore garlands of freshly blossomed *mallika* flowers and natural earrings made from *sirisa* flowers. They tied garlands of *kurci* flowers in their hair. Adorned with these attractive fragrant flowers, the two brothers, Balarama and Damodara played happily with Their friends.

One boy sang in a very sweet voice. Some boys played musical instruments while others danced. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa vibrated His flute while Balarama danced. At other times, Kṛṣṇa danced to the singing of Balarama and His friends. In a melodious tone Kṛṣṇa called the *gopas*, “Ho! Ho! My brothers! Now stop your dancing because we are going to play a new game.”

While running to meet their friend, the *gopas* replied, “O Damodara! What sort of game do You want to play?”

Kṛṣṇa said, “Listen! Let us divide ourselves into two parties. One party will go with the powerful Balarama and the other party will side with Me.” Thus Kṛṣṇa divided His friends into two parties in order to hold a contest of strength. The boys in Balarama’s party followed Him like loyal soldiers and the other boys accompanied Kṛṣṇa. The losing party had to carry the victors on their backs. Kṛṣṇa’s party lost, and even though Kṛṣṇa carries the whole universe in His belly, He had to carry Sridama on His shoulders.

Under the influence of time, Pralambasura, the deceitful one, disguised himself as a cowherd boy and secretly mixed with Kṛṣṇa’s friends. Being defeated in the contest, Pralambasura had to carry the victorious Baladeva, who looked extremely enchanting and effulgent with sandalwood paste daubed on His golden white body. Taking Balarama on his shoulders, the demon carried Him to the edge of the Bhandiravana forest.

Pralambasura thrilled with the thought; “I have accomplished my mission. Like a thief I have broken all the rules of the game and stolen a valuable jewel.”

At first Balarama was amazed at the extraordinary power of His carrier, but then He instantly understood the situation. Smiling mildly, Balarama called out to His playful younger brother, “O Damodara! Hey Manorama! Just as insanity robs one’s intelligence, this demon is trying kidnap Me. O You of

infallible will power! What should I do now? Hey relisher of mellows! Without hesitating any longer, please give Me proper instructions.”

Kṛṣṇa felt somewhat amused to see and hear all of this. Then in a thundering voice He assured Baladeva, “Give up all Your fears. Why are You submitting to illusion? Just remember Your own divine power and slay the demon.”

Using His unrivaled strength, which far exceeded the power of the thunderbolts Indra uses to cut the wings of mountains, Balarama, the elder brother of Madhusudana, smashed the demon’s head into little pieces with His fist. With tremendous power the Lord drove the demon to the kingdom of Yama. Before departing, the demon assumed a huge grotesque form. The Vrajavasis thought that Balarama, whose complexion is whiter than fresh camphor, looked like the full moon sitting on top of the dome-like covering of the universe as He sat upon the demon’s shoulders.

The demon’s body had a dark smoky color. But due to profuse bleeding his hideous body now looked like a cluster of clouds in the reddish sky at sunset. Covered completely in blood, Pralambasura slowly fell to the ground. While falling he appeared like the sun setting behind the Vindhya Mountain, which is covered with red *asoka* flowers. The splendid demigods, who are expert in glorifying others, showered flowers on the head of Balarama to celebrate His victory over the demon.

The notorious demon named Pralamba had displayed great *tantric* magic. But eventually he perished under the fierce blows of Baladeva whose chariot bears the symbol of a palm tree. In front of everyone, Balarama humbly accepted the name Pralambaghna (one who removes all sins from the heart) honorably bestowed upon Him by Lord Indra. Thereafter Balarama met with His brother Damodara, who always gives joy to others and is dear to all the *gopas*.

Proud of His recent accomplishment, Balarama felt unlimitedly blissful within His mind. But He became confused upon seeing the bewildered faces of the cowherd boys when He rejoined Kṛṣṇa who was resting in the shade of a beautiful *banyan* tree named Bhandiravat.

Kṛṣṇa Swallows the Munjatavi Fire

Once upon a time while Damodara, Balarama, Sridama, Sudama, Subala and the other *gopas* rested beside the Yamuna, the cows, attracted by the fresh sprouted grass, wandered deep into a nearby forest named Munjatavi. For no apparent reason the birds sleeping in the trees suddenly startled, filled with fear, and darted from the treetops when the cows entered the forest.

Kṛṣṇa, whose eyes are colored like pink lotus flowers and who is the inner guide of all living entities, noticed that the *gopas* had become apprehensive about the safety of the cows. In a mood of love Kṛṣṇa compassionately addressed them, “Hey friends! Look! Where have our cows gone? Only the light of happiness shines in this forest full of birds and deer. So there is really no need to worry about the cows. Nevertheless, since we cannot see any of them right now, let us go find the cows and rejoice again in their company.”

After the beautiful Lord spoke, the *gopas*, who are expert in herding cows, looked for partially chewed grass, fresh hoof prints in the soil, and any other signs of the cows’ movements. Following these signs, they walked through the densely foliated forest. Reaching the end of their desire to search any longer, the cowherd boys became doubtful and apprehensive about the safety of the cows. They resembled people who become full of distress and lamentation after not finding any happiness in life.

Suddenly the *gopas* saw a powerful forest fire devouring all the dry reeds and grass in its path. Their eyes burned from the blustery hot winds generated by that fire. Overwhelmed with sadness and anxiety, the cowherd boys looked at each other with tear-filled eyes. Their movements resembled a bewildered man who prays when facing difficulty. Not finding the cows, the *gopas* just kept thinking about them.

Meanwhile, seeing no sign of their masters, no escape from the fire, and no hope for survival, the cows cried in fear. Upon returning to the Bhandiravat tree, the *gopas* reported the results of their search. Kṛṣṇa responded by promising to personally save the cows from imminent death. Although Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Brahman and a *cintamani* gem fulfilling the desires of all, He assumes the form of an ordinary human being.

Dashing into the Munjatavi forest, Kṛṣṇa summoned the cows with a sweet tune from His flute. Then He called them individually with His melodious voice, “Hee! Hee! Hee! Hey Dhavalike! Hey Candani! Hey Nandini! Hey Mukte! Hey Indu-tilake! Hey Kasturi! Hey Karpurike! Hey Pinge! Hey Rangini! Hey Dhumale! Hey Kinjalike! Hey Syame! Hey Ketuki! Hey Candrike! Hey Shavalike! Hey Kasmirike! Hey Campake! Hee! Hee! Hee!”

The transcendental vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s magnificent *murali* enchanted the entire universe and attracted the cows. Hearing the gentle sound of Kṛṣṇa’s sweet flute reassured the cows of their imminent rescue. Overwhelmed with joy, the cows eagerly waited for Kṛṣṇa. But since they were trapped in a ring of fire they could not see their savior. In desperation they cried in response to Kṛṣṇa’s call. Their voices choked with fear, the cows continually vibrated a piteous “Humba! Humba! Humba!”

Though far beyond the comprehension of *munis*, *jnanis*, and impersonalists, Kṛṣṇa is easily seen by His pure devotees. Hearing the wailing of the cows in the distance, Nandanandana, Haladhara, and Their *gopa* friends felt reassured that they were nearby. The brilliant effulgences and radiant smiles of the cowherd boys dispelled the deep darkness of the forest as they rushed toward the cows. The rising tidal wave of jubilation cleansed all anxieties from their bewildered minds.

Then by the arrangement of Providence, the boys found the cows standing helplessly unprotected in the middle of a blazing fire. “Alas! Look how they are suffering! They are in great danger and very close to death,” thought the cowherd boys. The greatly distressed cows immersed their minds in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa while staring at Him with shining, tear-filled eyes. Being the limitless ocean of compassion, Kṛṣṇa felt very much aggrieved to see their agonized condition.

The raging flames of the fire reached so high into the sky that even a torrential downpour could not extinguish them. Before immediately swallowing that uncontrollable forest fire, Kṛṣṇa, whose face is incomparably beautiful, addressed His followers, “O friends! Just close your eyes, forget about this illusion, and be happy again.” The cowherd boys, their long hair hanging attractively over their shoulders, closed their eyes while Kṛṣṇa displayed a drop of His unlimited opulence.

Kṛṣṇacandra, who can do anything, held His cupped hands to His lotus mouth and drank the forest fire as if it were liquid ambrosia. It appeared that His majestic power personified had swallowed the fire. Usually it takes a torrential downpour to stop a forest fire. But Kṛṣṇa, however, who easily extinguishes the blazing fire of material existence, put out the fire with a sidelong glance. Out of compassion for the cows, Kṛṣṇa saved them with a mere touch of His own energy.

Kṛṣṇa attracts worldly people to His transcendental pastimes by showing His majestic opulence from time to time. As one presses pulp to extract the essence, Kṛṣṇa's pastimes reveal the essence of the Absolute Truth. This is not surprising since Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Parabrahman, the embodiment of all power who energizes the sun, moon, and fire. At the same time He is full of variegated personal energies. At one moment Kṛṣṇa kills the demon Bakasura, and the next moment He relishes intimate pastimes with the *gopis*. Sometimes He covers His sweet personal aspect, and displays the inestimable power of His unlimited majestic opulences. Besides acting as the resting place of Brahman, Kṛṣṇa shelters all types of energies. Therefore, swallowing a tiny forest fire is an insignificant feat for such a wonderful personality as Kṛṣṇa, who is the combined form of complete sweetness and majesty. What scholar would not become totally captivated when trying to understand the inconceivable truth of Sri Kṛṣṇa?

Inspired and blissful over the whole pastime, Brahma and other demigods showered flowers from the celestial gardens. The flower shower appeared like the falling of an unlimited number of teardrops mixed with *kajala*. Kṛṣṇa pleased the demigods by happily accepting their prayers. By the arrangement of Yogamaya no one saw Kṛṣṇa swallow the forest fire.

Afterwards Kṛṣṇa returned to the *gopas* who were relaxing with the cows in the cool sweet shade of Bhandiravat. Smiling mildly, Kṛṣṇa said, "Now you understand why I asked you to close your eyes. Now open your eyes and look at Me."

The *gopas* opened their eyes and exclaimed, "O look! What happened? Did we go crazy? Where is that forest fire? Was it just a dream? Somehow we are just sitting here peacefully under the *banyan* tree with the cows." Feeling astonished, the cowherd boys became silent.

The cows felt happy and secure now that the forest fire was extinguished. Seeing Kṛṣṇa, whose feet are the supreme objects of worship and the epitome of purity, the cows became overwhelmed with joy. The cows cried while repeatedly licking and smelling the Lord's transcendental body due to intense affection. Reciprocating with them, Kṛṣṇa compassionately fondled the cows with His delicate pinkish palms.

Returning to Nandagrama with the Cows

Indicating his desire to disappear behind the mountains, the sun gradually diminished his painful scorching rays. The scent of honey from the lotus flowers blossoming in the lakes refreshed the air with a sweet fragrance. Smelling it, the bees went mad with desire to taste it. The atmosphere felt pleasant and the ground was soothing to touch.

Gathering the herds of cows, the *gopas* walked along with Kṛṣṇa, who played sweet, gentle tunes on His *murali* while driving the cows home. Bellowing happily as they moved, the cows fixed their eyes in the direction of Nandagrama. As they passed through the various villages along the way, Kṛṣṇa cast sidelong glances toward the *gopis*, who stood on their rooftops to greet Him as He walked by.

The Vrajavasis took immense pleasure in seeing their beloved Kṛṣṇa and Balarama after the long summer's day. Kṛṣṇa's beautiful dark blue curly locks peeking out from the edge of His limestone-white turban enchanted the eyes of everyone. The dust rising from the hooves of the cows created an auspicious atmosphere. Gentle breezes added a comfortable sensation. The breeze, purified by the touch of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body, soothed and satisfied all the Vrajavasis as they watched the returning boys and cows.

Drinking the sweet vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute with the cups of their ears, the deer hurried to the edge of the forest to see Him. The birds that felt empty in His separation and the trees that had become lean and thin again rejoiced upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's reassuring flute. Kṛṣṇa entered a joyful mood as He approached the border of Vṛndavana. Rows of excited bumblebees formed a garland of blue sapphires to adorn the neck of Vṛndavana. The bees went blind from smelling the sweet fragrance of lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa. And although

a strong wind crushed their pride in flying, they tried their best to follow Him.

Enthusiastic to return home, Haladhara ran down the long road into Vrndavana. Kṛṣṇa, the radiant prince of Vrndavana, who is the abundant treasure house of beauty endowed with unlimited varieties of good fortune, however, lagged behind while returning from the pasturing ground. He deliberately walked slowly like an intoxicated baby elephant in order to create some distance between Himself and His brother Balarama. Kṛṣṇa was suddenly maddened with bliss as a result of His deep-rooted affection for the Vraja *gopis*. Now without any shame or fear of His elder brother, Kṛṣṇa unhesitatingly fixed His eyes on the *candrasalikas* (small rooftop rooms for panoramic viewing). Standing in the *candrasalikas*, the *gopis* filled the sky with the countless full moons of their faces glowing with love. The blue lotuses of their eyes covered the broad lakes of their chests. Colorful rainbows from their dazzling jewelry illumined the sky. The black bees of their darkened eyebrows restlessly circled the flowering creepers of their smiles. The rivers of their liquid beauty flowed down to touch the ground below.

The *gopis* thought continuously of Kṛṣṇa within their hearts while separated from Him during the day. Although Lord Siva held poison in his throat, the *gopis* could not contain the intense hankering of their hearts to see Kṛṣṇa. Forcefully surging from their hearts, this fervor choked their voices and made them lose external awareness. As the day gradually met the evening, the *gopis*, forever bound to Kṛṣṇa by unbreakable ties of love, became agitated with the desire to see Him.

Seeing Kṛṣṇa in the distance with His ever fresh, youthful body glistening like a dark blue cloud, the *gopis* immediately blossomed in ecstatic love. Kṛṣṇa wore a colorful turban decorated with a peacock feather jutting out the side. Suddenly Kṛṣṇa glanced directly at the *gopis* standing in the *candrasalikas*. At that moment the *gopis* appeared to be drinking the sweet nectar of Kṛṣṇa's gorgeous form with the cups of their eyes; touching Him with their hands; and licking Him with their tongues. Kṛṣṇa transformed into the black *kajala* around their eyes, the blue lotuses over their ears, the sapphire necklaces on their chests, and the musk ointment smeared on their

bodies. Stunned in love, the *gopis* just stood motionless like figures drawn on a painting.

Viewing the situation, Kṛṣṇa's dear friend Kusumasava said jokingly, "O dear friend! For many days we have not seen anything so astonishing. When You disappear in the forest like the sun sinking into the water, the *gopis* in the *candrasalikas* look like lotuses growing in the sky sustaining their life in the waters of love. When You reappear as the moon throwing its rays on the earth, they blossom in delight like night blooming lotuses. There is nothing more amazing anywhere on the earth. In Brahma's entire creation you will not find a more astounding or attractive scene." After saying this, Madhumangala cleverly pointed out the beloved daughter of Vrsabhanu.

Though glancing at all the *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa especially noticed the attractive lotus face of Radhika, which pleases the eyes, exceeds all description, and is beautified with ecstatic love. Their meeting ended the day's long separation as They satisfied each other with sidelong glances. The nectar of love for each other constantly flowed in Kṛṣṇa's heart and in the hearts of the *gopis*.

With great anticipation the Vrajavasis awaited the return of Kṛṣṇa and the cows. First they saw the dust clouds in the distance created by the hooves of the cows cutting the earth. Then they heard the bellowing of the cows and saw the *gopas* coming close behind. And finally they beheld the bright blue effulgence preceding the jewel-like prince of Vrndavana.

Overwhelmed with the desire to lick their calves, the cows tried to run, but the heavy weight of their full milk bags checked their forward movement. Becoming jubilant upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute, their eyes rolled in ecstasy. Though their voices faltered when they mooed, they produced a pleasing sound as they entered Vrndavana. The touch of Vanamali's cows purified the earth. The rays of the sun shined in the house of Nanda and Yasoda as they welcomed their beloved son. Moved by limitless joy, Yasoda rushed to embrace Nandanandana. Finally seeing Him after the long day of His playing in the forest overwhelmed Yasoda with happiness and removed the pangs of separation. Rejecting all rules of formality, she took Kṛṣṇa through the lion gate and directly into the palace courtyard.

Kṛṣṇa's lips bathed in the beautiful light of His radiant teeth. The cowherd boys accompanying Kṛṣṇa felt happy and pleased in heart. With great animation they spoke excitedly to Vrajesvari Yasoda, "O mother! Today a demon disguised himself as one of us and tried to kidnap Haladhara. But your son Balarama easily killed this malicious character. Then a terrible forest fire threatened to devour the cows, the very source of our wealth. But Kṛṣṇa promised to save them, and did so by performing the impossible task of destroying that fire." After reporting this, the boys returned to their respective homes.

Due to Yasoda's deep motherly affection, milk automatically poured from her breasts as she embraced Kṛṣṇa whose body surpasses the beauty of a monsoon cloud. A festive mood pervaded the house as Yasoda led Kṛṣṇa to His room. Raktaka, Patraka, and other house servants, with hearts full of affection, served Kṛṣṇa by bathing and dressing Him.

A brilliant necklace glowed on Kṛṣṇa's chest. A yellow silk *dhoti* as beautiful as stationary lightning enwrapped His exquisite form. The sandalwood pulp on His body appeared like snow sprinkled on the land of Vrndavana. Ridiculing the radiance of the sun, the *kaustubha* gem, which is the king of all jewels, reigned over the kingdom of Kṛṣṇa's broad chest. His earrings outshone the brilliance of Venus and Jupiter. The luster of Kṛṣṇa's face far surpassed the pleasing full moon in autumn. The turban resting on His head looked like an intoxicated swan.

Kṛṣṇa chewed on *betel* nuts scented with camphor to remove the fatigue of the hot summer's day. The *pan* represented the intoxicating mellow of the *gopas'* love-filled hearts. Kṛṣṇa, the best of respected persons, stole the minds of the *gopas* and filled them with ecstatic sweetness of *sakhya bhava*. Kṛṣṇa's jewel inlaid shoes did not touch the earth as He stepped outside to walk to the *goshalla*. His tightly wrapped yellow *dhoti* moved slightly in the gentle breeze as He walked along the royal road before the lion gate. The light from its inset *candrakanta* jewels illuminated the road that had been decorated with garlands to honor Sri Kṛṣṇa's return. These jewels perspired drops of cooling nectar which in turn made the wind moist and refreshing. Everything became even more pleasing due to the nectar shower of the rising full moon.

The Gopis Watch Kṛṣṇa Milking the Cows

The white hue of the pure-minded cows sitting along the road, which looked as white as powdered camphor, easily surpassed the glow of the full moon to create a satisfying sight for all. The beautiful white bodies of the cows could only be distinguished from the lustrous setting by their thick horns that appeared blacker than a swarm of bumblebees. Sitting there peacefully the cows felt boundless joy. Desirous to milk the cows, the *gopas* met with Kṛṣṇa, who tastefully performs all artistic feats and derives pleasure from all that He does. Moving His lotus eyes in all directions, Kṛṣṇa milked the cows with great fun and affection.

The news that Kṛṣṇa was milking the cows entered the ears of the *gopis* like a lusty elephant trampling the lotus flowers of their minds. Their minds captivated by Madan-mohan, the *gopis* ignored their relatives and courageously climbed the watchtowers to see their beloved. One *gopi* enthusiastically clutched another's hand and pulled her up the stairs. As the doe-eyed *gopis* gazed in the direction of Kṛṣṇa and the cows, the sky filled with the blue lotus flowers of their ardent, loving glances.

They bathed their minds in the river of nectar flowing from the moonlight face of Kṛṣṇa. Like independent *yoginis*, the curious eyes of the *gopis* blissfully roamed in all directions as they stood on the rooftops watching Kṛṣṇa milk the cows. Nothing could prevent their eyes from staring at Kṛṣṇa. Their eyes tried to milk the nectar from the gorgeous face of their beloved.

Though Brahma himself cannot describe this pastime of Kṛṣṇa milking the cows, and a sparrow can never reach the stars, still this insignificant poet cannot resist the temptation to delight in the transcendental pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore he has tried to glorify them by using the choicest words.

Kṛṣṇa's turban looked very attractive as it tilted slightly from rubbing against the belly of the cows. Squatting down and holding the golden milk pail between His knees, Kṛṣṇa looked very enchanting in His glimmering yellow *dhoti*. While milking the cows His back arched beautifully and His elbows jutted out to the sides as He squeezed and released the udders with His bud like fingers. First Kṛṣṇa moistened His thumb and forefinger with milk foam, and then He deftly pulled showers of milk from one udder after

another. The touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus hand felt dearer to the cows than their own calves. Out of affection for the Lord, the cows freely poured forth streams of milk. That forceful pouring of milk made a pleasant sound as it filled the deep milking pot. It spilled out on the ground before a new pot could be brought.

As they stood in the watchtowers glancing restlessly at Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* succumbed to both anxiety and ecstasy. Now that Kṛṣṇa had sat down in the minds of those desirous *gopis*, their minds became so heavy that even a thousand chariots could not drag them away from their beloved Lord. Though shaking in fear of their superiors, the *gopis* were totally enchanted by the sweet festival of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful *darsana*. The mood of awe and reverence could not stand before their spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa. Even if the *gopis* seem hypocritical, they are completely infallible and beyond mistakes. Those gorgeous *gopis* looked like golden creepers fashioned by an expert goldsmith. Feeling compassion for the maidservants standing beside them in the *candrasalikas*, they shared the joy rising within their hearts by conversing with them.

“Hey *sakhi*, listen! The creation of my eyes has attained perfection by the soothing sight of Syamasundara. I am relishing the palatable elegance of my Lord whose ever-youthful, dark blue body glows like a fresh rain cloud. My body is tormented with fever due to opposition from the village elders. Still I want to make my body fit to be controlled by Kṛṣṇa who expertly displays the highest perfection in different arts.

“Just see, even in this condition my intelligence works nicely. Hey listen, O playful creepers! In the absence of the bees, the clusters of lotuses lose their joy and luster. Therefore, O best of beautiful girls! We must now exhibit the strength of our *mantra* chanting by attracting Kṛṣṇa into our courtyards.”

Another *sakhi* replied, “How can we do it?”

The first *sakhi* answered, “Listen, I will tell you. In our house even the strongest girl cannot possibly milk the cows. Even for a fearless person, it is very difficult to control the cows because they are very strong and frisky. But due to our reluctance to milk them we are not deriving any wealth from their milk products. Therefore the minds of our superiors like our mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law are burning with grief like the blazing sun.”

Second *sakhi* said, “So what does that matter to you? Just ask your guardians why aren’t they milking the cows and deriving any milk products from them? Advise them to simply lovingly call out for Kṛṣṇa. And when the cows see Him they will automatically surrender their milk.”

The first *sakhi* responded, “But then our elders will ask, ‘Who is He and where does He live?’ ”

Second *sakhi*, “You should answer them by describing the wonderful milking activities of Kṛṣṇa that you have just seen. O *sakhi*! Then I am sure that your superiors will immediately respond to your entreaty. Because the wise and intelligent always respond to a good idea. Kṛṣṇa alone has the power to break all psychic inhibitions and fill the mind with unprecedented delight. He always affectionately cares for everyone. By His ecstatic pastimes He provides soothing shelter for a tormented mind. Although Kṛṣṇa is the supremely independent master of all intelligence, at the present time He submits to the authority and protection of His affectionate parents. Due to His love for all of us, I am convinced that as soon as our superiors inform Him of our dilemma, Kṛṣṇa will respond by rushing here to milk our unruly cows.” Thus the *gopis* passed their time discussing these delightful topics.

Garlanded with wild flowers and surrounded by humming bees, Kṛṣṇa walked back to His house after milking the cows. Unlimited qualities decorated Kṛṣṇa at this time. The necklace adorning His broad chest swung back and forth like a shooting star. The ocean of joy within Kṛṣṇa flowed out of His lotus eyes to flood the lakes of the *gopis*’ hearts. Kṛṣṇa’s unlimited attributes appeared like sharks to devour the tender hearts the *gopis*.

With the carefree movement of a royal elephant Kṛṣṇa rocked from side to side as He walked down the road. Immersed in loving rapture, the *gopis* stared with unblinking eyes at His sweet lotus feet as He passed by. Kṛṣṇa’s presence inflamed their senses with excitement and satisfaction. But when Kṛṣṇa left their sight their eyes stopped functioning for want of anything worth looking at. Within their minds, however, the *gopis* found paramount pleasure by lying down with Kṛṣṇa on the flowerbed of surrender.

When Kṛṣṇa takes the cows to the pastures in the daytime, His lovers almost die from the severe pain of separation piercing the core of their hearts. It appears that a virulent poison has spread through their bodies. This intolerable, burning pain of separation, however, is extinguished by the two nectar showers of seeing Kṛṣṇa returning in the cool summer evening, and relishing His matchless beauty at that refreshing time.

Thus the Lord of unlimited power joyfully passed everyday of the summer tending the cows in the forest. Surrendered souls can easily perceive this delightful form of the Lord. By His personal presence Kṛṣṇa sweetened the whole world and attracted everyone to His spectacular transcendental pastimes.

Kṛṣṇa Pastimes in the Rainy Season

Kṛṣṇa went to the forest to tend the cows and play various sportive games in the company of Haladhara and the cowherd boys. Upon entering the forest they met the fortunate goddess of the rainy season. Seeing the beauty of the rainy season personified as a heroine, Kṛṣṇa remarked, “Aho! Look what a wonderful sight!”

Kṛṣṇa saw the goddess of the rainy season pervaded by a lusciously sweet fragrance from wearing the pollen of *kadamba* flowers. The swarms of bumblebees darting through the air were her provocative glances cast at Kṛṣṇa. She wore effulgent, attractive blue garments in the form of freshly formed, glistening rain clouds. The gentle rumbling of radiant rain clouds filled the forest with the sweet sound of her elegant voice. She offered newly sprouted barley grass as a bed for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. This colorful green bed of fresh grass defeated the beauty of a collection of the brightest emeralds.

The millions of *indragopas* (tiny red insects) crawling over the ground colored the delicate lotus feet of that goddess of the rainy season with an effulgent red *lac*. A row of splendid restless cranes adorned her throat as a pearl necklace. The fanned tails of the dancing peacocks comprised her beautiful hair. The fragrant air blowing by the *arjuna* trees laden with sweet flowers formed her pleasant breath.

Her gentle, enchanting face was moistened with tears of tiny raindrops. Erect petals of bright yellow *kadamba* flowers formed her hairs that stood

on end due to a rarely perceived ecstasy. She eagerly waited to offer Kṛṣṇa a fragrant garland made from the tiny *malati* flowers on her dangling creepers. Her restless eyes lowered out of respect and timidity when she offered her services to Kṛṣṇa.

As an expert maidservant, she made wonderful garlands to decorate the whole forest of Vṛndavana with an abundance of fragrant flowers. Overflowing with love and affection for Kṛṣṇa, she desired to serve the Lord in various ways. Her bodily complexion reflected the fresh, dark blue rain clouds decorating the sky. Thus the goddess of the rainy season pleased the entire world with her sweetness.

Just as one gets relief from the scorching heat of summer by taking the proper medicine, similarly, all the living entities in Vṛndavana delighted with the appearance of the refreshing rainy season. The Vrajavasis felt that a magnanimous physician in the form of time had awarded them the personified wealth of the rainy season. The blustering winds appeared to be the cool breath of the goddess of the rainy season. The grass standing erect on the ground represented the thrill bumps of the rainy season due to feelings of ecstatic joy. The peaceful green fields looked very charming under the beautiful deep blue sky. It seemed that the sun had retreated to a distant place to fall asleep. And with its disappearance all the miseries of the hot season also disappeared.

The rainy season felt proud of the many peacocks jubilantly dancing here and there. Seeing the joyful flying of the *cataki* and *gallinule* birds made her smile in happiness. Hearing the delightful voice of the *cataki* birds brought her immense satisfaction. The abundant blossoming *kadamba* flowers formed the smiling face of the rainy season.

A rich fragrance of musk saturated the entire atmosphere. Profuse rains bathed the mountain sides and washed the forest pathways of all debris. Just as the bones of a fat man cannot be seen, similarly, due to flooding, the islands in the middle of rivers disappeared. Since the whole forest had become overrun with a dense growth of reeds, the herds of deer could no longer sport and play. Fresh grass abounded everywhere to fatten the joyous cows that no longer wandered to distant pastures.

What more can I say about the beauty of the rainy season in Vrndavana which brought supreme satisfaction to the playful prince of Vrndavana?

During this time the cows ambled lazily under the shady trees. Kṛṣṇa beautified the entire scene by sitting nearby on the root of a tree and singing a wonderful melody. The cows looked lovingly at Kṛṣṇa while munching the plentiful grass. The sound of their teeth cutting the grass was very pleasing. Becoming fully satisfied from eating the lush foliage, the cows moved very slowly. They walked peacefully here and there without any disturbance from insects like mosquitoes and biting horse flies.

The constant swinging of their tails created a marvelous scene of pure effulgent beauty. Upon filling their bellies, the cows lost all desire to eat any more grass. To find relief from the heat of the day, they rested amidst the soft cooling grass and slowly chewed their cud. Turning their gentle faces toward Kṛṣṇa, the cows glanced at Him with love and gratitude. Kṛṣṇa took great delight in seeing them.

As the cows rested, Kṛṣṇa and His boyfriends absorbed themselves in playing ball with the flower buds of the *kadamba* trees. Observing the sweet sporting of Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys, the demigods flying in their airplanes became totally infatuated. Exhilarated with joy, the clouds raced across the sky, broke into small pieces, and gradually disappeared. Due to the increasing heat of the day, attractive pearl-like drops of perspiration formed on Kṛṣṇa's sweet lips and lotus face. Though tired from playing, Kṛṣṇa looked very radiant and attractive.

Stopping His play, Kṛṣṇa sat down on a large root under the shade of a tall tree. To free themselves from the offense of subjecting Kṛṣṇa to such intense sunrays, the clouds released tiny drops of rain that felt like a shower of cooling camphor. Gentle, refreshing breezes scented with the sweet fragrance of *malati* flowers blew in all directions. In this way, the season served the Lord who forever enacts the sweetest pastimes.

Standing in a three-fold bending form, Kṛṣṇa emanated the finest elegance. Placing His cow herding stick under His left arm, Kṛṣṇa looked very attractive as He leaned on it and crossed His right leg over His left. The flower garland hanging from His graceful neck gently swung back and forth. Enchanting tunes and melodies echoed throughout the forest as Kṛṣṇa

played His celebrated flute. The cows extended their ears to drink the stream of nectar, and the male deer stood motionless, captivated by the sweet vibration.

Kṛṣṇa's flute song, the very embodiment of transcendental sound, completely enchanted the minds of the cowherd boys. One boy said to Kṛṣṇa, "It is the nature of the *mallara raga* that You are playing to indicate an impending rainfall. The rumbling of the clouds resembles the maudlin mood created by the crying of Your flute. O Kṛṣṇa! Please tell us why You are playing so sweetly and artistically? Due to the thick covering of rain clouds, I am bewildered and cannot tell whether it is day or night.

"O remover of all misfortune! Let us go now and return to the village. Although Your nature is to be gentle and joyful, sometimes You are naughty and disobedient. The monsoon showers have stopped for now, so put Your sweet-sounding flute to rest. Let us wake up the sleeping cows and quickly go home."

Kṛṣṇa, whose face is more radiant than the full moon, enjoyed the joking and laughter of His intimate boyfriends. While taking the cows along the path home He made sweet music on His celebrated flute. Looking in all directions, Kṛṣṇa became absorbed in His transcendental pastimes. His unique matchless elegance put to shame the beauty of blue lotus flowers and the best of emeralds. His hands, feet, and body moved in waves of condensed brilliance.

According to scriptures, Kṛṣṇa is the personification of *Parabrahman*. As He strolled gracefully down the path, it seemed as if another rain cloud moved along the earth. The embodiment of the earth's greatest treasure now walked on her surface. Somewhat tired from the long day of playing and tending the cows, Kṛṣṇa moved slowly as He proceeded toward Vrndavana. The cows also ambled along in a leisurely mood.

It appeared that the entire city of Vrndavana bathed in the first shower of the rainy season. After the rainfall, proud peacocks, famous for their dancing ability, strutted about the roof tops of every home with their long, thick, green tail feathers fanned out to dry in the sun. As the sun set over the city of Vrndavana, its reddish rays, redder than a *bimba* fruit, spread across

the clear western sky. The red sunrays looked like the line of *sindura* on a woman's hair part.

The eighty four thousand jalousie windows within the palaces appeared like the eyes of the city of Vrndavana, who had now attained the fortune of relishing the wonderful elegance of Kṛṣṇa's body as He sauntered into the city. The holes of these windows seemed like the eyes of Kṛṣṇa's thousands of cows that constantly drink the nectar of His exquisite beauty. The splendid flags flying over the city looked like tender green leaves waving in the wind. Their flapping indicated the intense joy felt within the mind of the goddess of Vrndavana as she watched Kṛṣṇa return.

Overwhelmed with ecstasy, the goddess of Vrndavana desired to dance. Due to the heavy downpour pools of water were lying here and there. The excess water spilling over the rooftops merged with these pools and made them overflow. The water, scented by sweet flowers of various creepers, smelled more fragrant than sandalwood as it rushed through the gutters of the city. Due to carrying an abundance of white sand that water appeared brighter than camphor. Out of pure love the fortunate goddess of Vrndavana used this water to wash the feet of Kṛṣṇa's cows as they entered their respective *goshallas*.

Kṛṣṇa, dressed in glittering yellow garments and smiling attractively, churned the heart of Cupid and dispelled all darkness as He led the cows into the *goshalla*. With a loving glance He instantly removed the sadness rising within the hearts of His companions who contemplated their imminent separation. Consoled, the boys ran off to their respective homes. Entering the palace, Kṛṣṇa sat down to eat a variety of palatable foods. All the wealth of the heavenly planets could not compare to the opulence of those sumptuous eatables.

After being fed wonderful foods and drinks by mother Yasoda, Kṛṣṇa laid down to rest on a bed with sheets whiter than powdered camphor. The buzzing of the bees hovering about filled Kṛṣṇa's bedroom with a melodious sound. While enjoying the sweet smell of the aromatic herbs and dried flowers stuffed in His pillow, Kṛṣṇa slowly fell asleep and passed the night.

The Purva-raga of Srimati Radhika

Before Radhika ever met personally with Kṛṣṇa, She had already developed immense attraction for Him. Radharani's relatives, however, barely perceived the change in Her consciousness due to the infection of Kṛṣṇa's attraction. None of the other *gopis* understood the extent of the pain Radhika felt in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Radhika had attained the ultimate state of attachment to Kṛṣṇa on account of the burning fire of Her growing love for Him.

As they learned of this burning attraction, Radhika's relatives wondered how to extinguish this fire and remove Radhika's depression. Radhika's dearest *sakhis* tried to restore Her blissful state by waking Her from this position of unconsciousness. The *sakhis* drenched the daughter of Vrsabhanu with the fountain-spray of their tears whenever Radhika's mind burned with the fire of separation. Despite this display of affection, Radhika gradually became more and more entangled in the network of love.

And whenever Radhika would return to external consciousness, She realized that only Kṛṣṇa's intimate association could cure Her disease. Radhika maintained Her life with the fleeting hope of some day meeting Kṛṣṇa, who is impossible to attain. But gradually Her life dwindled away and rapidly approached the point of total devastation, the final stage of love in separation.

Being struck by the arrow of Cupid, Radhika's mind stopped functioning, Her external senses failed to work properly, and She appeared inert. Clusters of rain clouds raced across the sky. The horizon appeared like a devastated woman with closed eyes crying in separation from her lover. The torrential rain falling from those clouds appeared like profuse tears rolling down the face of that saddened woman.

Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, externally continued to relish different *rasas* with His loving mother, father, brother and friends. Together they enjoyed many happy pastimes. But within His heart Kṛṣṇa also felt afflicted due to separation from His most dearly beloved Radhika. To alleviate this condition, Kṛṣṇa constantly thought of Radhika and enjoyed various loving pastimes with Her within His mind. In this way, Kṛṣṇa executed His unlimited pastimes of bliss.

One auspicious day during the rainy season the cows grazed on the fresh green grass growing in a beautiful valley beside Govardhana. The jewels and precious stones on the surface of Govardhana Hill radiated a beautiful glow. Kṛṣṇa sat on a throne made of smooth stones next to a waterfall flowing with fragrant water from the top of the hill. Enjoying the atmosphere, He laughed and joked with His friends. Kṛṣṇa's boyfriends played a game using some crystalline stones having a dark blue mirror-like surface.

While they pushed and shoved each other, a lightning bolt suddenly flashed out of the clouds. It seemed that the clouds cast an angry look just to stop the boys' playing. Becoming frightened, the boys ran away. They returned upon regaining their courage. But when the clouds thundered once more, the boys ran away again. Picking up some creepers, they pretended to beat the clouds in retaliation. The clouds, however, responded by drenching them with a quick spray of rainwater.

At this time the joyful cowherd boys painted Kṛṣṇa's body with colored mineral powders. As His friends surrounded Him and happily danced for His pleasure, Kṛṣṇa floated in a river of bliss. Then He wandered around Govardhana Hill performing various ecstatic pastimes. As Kṛṣṇa's heart is full of *rasa* and decorated with the mark of Lakṣmi, similarly, Govardhana Hill is full of beauty and a wealth of fresh fruits and edible roots during the rainy season. Kṛṣṇa relished the sweet natural taste of the various fruits and roots brought by His intimate friends, whose hearts surged with happiness. Bound by their pure devotion, Kṛṣṇa easily finished all the foodstuffs collected from Govardhana Hill.

With His white teeth shining attractively as He smiled in satisfaction, Kṛṣṇa easily stole the hearts of every living entity. Kṛṣṇa's friends quickly prepared His favorite flavored *pan* from *betel* nuts, pure white lime paste, fragrant juice of banana that smelled like camphor, and the other items that they had previously collected. Thus being served in various ways, Kṛṣṇa enjoyed His pastimes on Govardhana Hill.

Kṛṣṇa took shelter in the caves of Govardhana Hill whenever the clouds sprinkled water. Sitting there biding His time until the rain stopped, Kṛṣṇa appeared like a beautiful baby elephant. The boys entertained that enchanting person by playing a game of shouting loudly into the back of the

cave and laughing at the echo. Vibrating deep angry sounds, they said, “Who are you? What are you saying?” The cave filled with clamor. Ordinarily it is offensive to mistreat a giver of shelter. Yet this irreverent behavior in the cave did not fault the cowherd boys, but embellished them with the ability to please Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, they blessed the cave by their presence.

Meanwhile, outside the cave it appeared that the rain smiled with its teeth of hailstones falling everywhere. Kṛṣṇa’s friends ran outside to pick up the particles of ice and bring them back to the cave. With hands folded as in *pushpanjali*, they offered the hailstones as flowers to Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.

When the rain stopped, Kṛṣṇa, whose face outshines the beauty of the full moon, and the cowherd boys, overflowing with bliss, left the cave and ran to the top of Govardhana Hill. Kṛṣṇa sat peacefully on a beautiful emerald rock that glittered brightly after being washed by the rain. His friends fanned Him with a pure white *camara* that saturated the air with the pleasing fragrance of musk. Hari, who removes all miseries, sat there in great happiness while gazing at the beauty of the forest, which appeared like a reflection of His own body.

Glancing over the earth and splendorous sky, Kṛṣṇa called the cows, “Hey Dhavali! Hey Kali! Hey Shavali!” Mooing in response, the cows ran across the valley to stand beside Kṛṣṇa. During the rainy season the forest of Vrndavana looked elegant and effulgent. As Kṛṣṇa’s body appears to be without qualities when viewed from a distance, the forest lost its detail when illuminated by the bright clouds. The expanse of forest resembled Kṛṣṇa’s attractive body, surrounded by buzzing bees and decorated with a *kadamba* garland fragrant with honey pollen.

As the brilliance of the Srivatsa mark beautifies Kṛṣṇa’s body, the forest served as a beautiful playground for herding the cows and calves. Kṛṣṇa’s body glowed with golden-yellow cloth and the forest shone with the sun’s rays, rivaling the radiance of the clouds. Impelled by deep attraction, the doe-eyed *gopis* desired to embrace the Lord’s body. Similarly, the forest abounded with the furtive glances of the deer, restless with attraction for Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa’s hands have long delicate fingers, the branches of the trees were covered with tender fresh leaves.

Fragrant herbs scented the forest. The emerald sprouts covering the ground tinted the trees with various pleasing colors due to their reflections. Being shielded from the sun's rays by the thick foliage and spotted with jewel-like lakes fed by fresh, fast flowing streams, the earth felt cool and refreshing. Moving clouds resembling clumps of herbs periodically covered the pleasing sky that wore the sun like an earring. That sky, spreading out in all directions and ringed at its edges by the expansive forest, appeared to merge with the forest.

Playing the purest notes on His flute, Kṛṣṇa looked like a blue sapphire pillar standing in the forest. That pillar held the flag of the abode of Lakṣmi as He stood amidst the circle of His fortunate and astonishing cowherd friends. Kṛṣṇa twirled the edge of His yellow cloth while admiring the remarkable combination of sky and forest. Then He called out the names of His cows in deep, clear syllables. Without any fear of attack from ferocious animals like tigers, the cows grazed peacefully on the sweet grass at the base of Govardhana Hill. But as soon as they heard Kṛṣṇa's voice, all the cows immediately became stunned and appeared like toy cows.

Due to their heavy weight the cows moved forward in a crooked manner. Yet as they got closer to Kṛṣṇa, they galloped quickly and trampled the grass under their hooves as they went to their merciful Lord. Crying and mooing over and over, the cows assembled before Kṛṣṇa. He addressed them, "Do not stay any longer." The cows respected the Lord's order and immediately proceeded to the valley.

The bees hummed in tune with the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's celestial flute. Kṛṣṇa's friends, who are bound to Him in love and forever assist Him in His playful pastimes, slowly climbed down Govardhana Hill. As Kṛṣṇa walked home it seemed as though He stole the minds of the various birds and beasts who could not go with Him. Thus throughout the rainy season Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends enjoyed various fun-filled pastimes along with the wonderful cows of Vṛndavana.

Kṛṣṇa's jeweled ankle-bells chimed sweetly as He strolled gracefully along the plateau. The purifying dust of Vṛndavana now covered the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, which are worshiped by the jeweled crowns of Brahma, Siva, and Parvati. Kṛṣṇa moved in measured steps as He walked behind the cows. He impressed the soft, moist breast of Mother Earth with the lotus flower,

elephant goad, conchshell, and other marks on the bottom of His feet. The touch of Kṛṣṇa's tender feet relieved Mother Earth from the painful burden of demons like Agha, Baka, Putana, and others. Thus Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhas* returned home.

Taking advantage of the rainy season, Yogamaya always created auspiciousness by her incomprehensible actions. At this time she could easily arrange for Radhika's rendezvous with Kṛṣṇa because the Vrajavasis move around less due to the inclement weather. During the beautiful nights Radhika patiently tolerated all the pains and difficulties induced by Her intense attachment to Kṛṣṇa. No one can describe the burden of Her love. The unlimited desire to meet the beloved of Gokula formed the heart of Radha. Kṛṣṇa inundates the universe with His beautiful form, qualities, and sweet pastimes whenever He manifests His transcendental love for Radhika.

It is the perennial duty of Yogamaya to bring about the union of the Divine Couple. The actions of Yogamaya are not so astonishing considering that Citralekha, a mere insignificant and unqualified mystic, easily transported Aniruddha from his palace in Dvaraka to secretly meet Usa within her father's impenetrable palace, which even powerful demigods like Indra could not enter. Each of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes gives bliss in accordance with one's angle of vision. Being eternal, they have nothing to do with the temporary pleasure derived from adolescence. By the influence of Yogamaya, the *gopis* attracted to Kṛṣṇa in the mood of conjugal love never witnessed His parental pastimes of sucking Yasoda's breast. This would not be compatible with the nature of the *gopis'* extraordinary relationship with the Lord.

Overwhelmed with love, Radhika decided to go out for Her first lover's tryst with the Lord of Her life. Auspicious signs adorned the night. The rain clouds overhead looked like a garland of *tamala* trees stretched across the evening sky. Radhika and Her confidential *sakhis* fearlessly entered the dark forest in quest of meeting the gallant Syamasundara. The menacing sound of the palace guards faded into the background as the *gopis* made their way deeper into the forest. Rati (Cupid's wife—the goddess of conjugal play) or Radhika's intense attachment personified as a messenger to lead Radha along the forest path to Kṛṣṇa.

Actually the unseen power of *prema* propelled all of Radhika's movements. To prevent Her relatives from discovering Her nocturnal journey, Radharani wore a blue *sari* and smeared Her body with musk. Abandoning fear, anxiety, and hesitation Radhika ran into the dark forest as fast as She could. Although She did not know the way, it did not matter because the driving force of Kṛṣṇa *prema* pushed Her automatically along the forest path. Only one thought checked the fickleness of Her mind—enjoying loving union with Syama. By distinct mental changes, Radhika understood that She had reached the meeting place. In the minds of both Radha and Kṛṣṇa the anticipation of union personified as Cupid to direct Them to the exact meeting place.

Radhika's thighs went numb as stone pillars upon arriving at the entrance of the *kunja*. Tears rolled down Her cheeks, Her hands and body shook, and Her mind lost all sense of direction. To get confidence Radhika clutched the hand of an intimate girlfriend, and with great hesitancy entered the *kunja* of Her beloved. But Alas! Alas! She suddenly desired to run away.

Then the *sakhis* urged Radhika to move closer to Kṛṣṇa, and Her bodily limbs slackened a little. She inched forward and then stopped abruptly. Within Her heart Radhika eagerly desired to embrace Syamasundara, but externally She feigned unwillingness. What more can be said? Although young and tender, the beautiful *sakhis* showed the utmost expertise in witty and crafty behavior.

One affectionate *sakhi* cajoled Radhika, “Hey *sakhi*! Today we beg one thing of You. Please give Kṛṣṇa the pleasure of touching You just once. After this we will never force You to go to Him again. O compassionate one! Seeing His distress and anxiety, please be kind to Him.”

Then the *sakhis* pushed beautiful, slender-waisted Radhika into the *kunja*. Since Radha had not yet been enriched in the art of making love, the *sakhi* named shyness personified appeared before Her. When the *sakhis* started to leave the *kunja*, Radhika tried to join them, but Kṛṣṇa forcefully grabbed Her hand. The touch of Her beloved evaporated Her desire to go. Being kept in the *kunja*, Radhika moved Her eyebrows to inform the *sakhis* not to leave Her alone with Kṛṣṇa. Reassuring Her with their glances, the *sakhis* remained by the side of Radhika.

Seeing Kṛṣṇa look wantonly at Her, Radhika closed Her eyes slightly out of shyness. When Kṛṣṇa asked what troubled Her, Radhika listened quietly but did not respond. While holding Her right hand in His left, Kṛṣṇa reached out to touch Radhika's body. Radhika blocked His hand and broke away from Him. Though not afraid, She stood some distance away from Kṛṣṇa.

Externally Radhika acted contrary to Kṛṣṇa, but internally She desired nothing but giving Kṛṣṇa the pleasure of union. Such are the dealings of new lovers. The seeming contrary behavior of Radhika increased the delight of Syamasundara's heart. Attaining something that is difficult to achieve always brings a feeling of great satisfaction. Paramour love, therefore, which is so rarely attained, brings the utmost pleasure.

Again Kṛṣṇa tried to embrace Radhika, but She arched Her eyebrows menacingly, and tried to get up from the pastime bed. Despite this display of opposition, Radhika really desired to please Kṛṣṇa with Her youthful behavior. Everyone knows that the effulgence of a powerful jewel easily removes the darkness of night. Nevertheless, neither the inducement of Her *sakhis*, the enchanting words of Kṛṣṇa, nor the powerful arrows of Cupid could convince Radhika to submit. Finally, Kṛṣṇa conquered Radhika's fortress of unwillingness. Casting a love-laden sidelong glance and roaring loudly, Kṛṣṇa forcibly embraced Radha to His powerful chest with the speed of lightning.

Kṛṣṇa drowned in a shower of inconceivable loving bliss. The changing moods of love expressed by Radhika resembled the soft, soothing tender rays of the moon passing through its various phases. At one moment, Radhika appeared to be thrown far away, way beyond the desire of anyone. Like a flower full of sweet nectar beyond the reach of the bees, Radhika became unattainable, beyond the touch of anyone's hand.

The next moment, Radhika was a garland of desire-tree flowers adorning the neck of Kṛṣṇa. Radha is non-different from Her name, which contains an unlimited flow of intoxicating nectar. One who chants *japa* of Her name will realize this. Wrapped within the embrace of the effulgent Prince of Vrndavana, Radhika lost all anxiety, independence, and fear of the thundering clouds. Totally overwhelmed in bliss, She forgot everything else.

Meanwhile, the *sakhis* abandoned their shyness and burst out with loud laughing upon seeing their cherished desire fulfilled. While glancing toward Radhika they spoke amongst themselves in such a way that Radha could hear them. They praised the roaring of the dark monsoon cloud, “Hey cluster of dark rain clouds! Due to your beautiful bodily complexion you are certainly qualified to make friendship with Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, you are the giver of blissful mellows and are therefore blessed. For this friend of yours has befriended the freshest and best of beauties. Although it is difficult for us to control Radhika, simply by roaring your friend forced Her into submission. It is your good fortune that your friend has achieved such an unprecedented victory.”

Pierced by the arrow of the *sakhis* joking, Radha became shy and showed opposition toward Kṛṣṇa. In reality Her heart spun in a whirlpool of *rasa*. Radiant with boldness, Kṛṣṇa held Radhika’s braid in one hand and Her chin in another. With great difficulty Kṛṣṇa subdued the maddened force of His ecstasy in order to treat Radha with the greatest tenderness in Their first meeting. He kissed Radha’s cheek so gently that the flower creeper designs painted there remained perfectly intact. Then He carefully kissed Her eyes so as not to smudge Her *kajala*, which was as dark as the Yamuna in color. Kṛṣṇa’s soft light touch did not even disturb one line of any drawing. This compares with the heart of a pure devotee that always remains undisturbed and free from fault.

It is a well-known fact that Siva lingas are always held in great respect. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa respectfully embraced the firm breasts of Radhika to His chest in gentle way in order not to break Her precious pearl necklace. As one overlooks the spots on the moon, similarly, Radhika, feeling ecstatic, overlooked the scratches that appeared on Her lips and breasts as Kṛṣṇa held Her blossoming breasts in His lotus hands. Just as it requires courage to hold a highly poisonous snake, similarly, Kṛṣṇa fearlessly touched the creeper like hairs near Radhika’s navel. Just as one thinks he will become successful by contacting the waters of the holy places, similarly, Kṛṣṇa gently touched the lake of nectar in Radha’s navel. As a *jnani* attains liberation from material bondage with great difficulty, similarly, with great endeavor Kṛṣṇa loosened the knot binding Radha’s dress.

To attain *Brahman* realization one must practice negating the things of this world by saying, “*neti, neti*” (not this, not this). Similarly, during the exchange of *rasa* and *bhava* in the beginning of conjugal union, only the negative words, “No! No! No!” came from the mouth of *mahabhava* Radharani. At this time, Kṛṣṇa attacked Radhika with the lightning strikes of His sidelong glances. As water forcefully cascades from a cloud punctured by mountain peak, a stream of loving tears poured from Radhika’s eyes.

The water rushing over the jeweled-rocks on top of Govardhana Hill makes a very pleasant sound. Similarly, the jeweled bangles around Radhika’s wrists vibrated with a sweet jingling as Her arms trembled in loving ecstasy. As clouds cover the mountain peaks during the rainy season, similarly, the broad chest of Ghanasyama covered the mountain-like breasts of Radhika. As the southern breeze blows gently, similarly, the movement of Radhika’s body slowed down by the appearance of the symptoms of ecstatic love. As the hot rays of the spring time sun cause perspiration, similarly, Radhika’s body broke out in pearl-like drops of perspiration as the bliss in love increased.

Like fresh leaves rustling in the wind, Radhika’s leaf-like fingers trembled slightly as She filled with Kṛṣṇa’s love. As swelling waves sometimes disrupt a reservoir, similarly, Radha’s choking up due to loving ecstasy disrupted the fluid movement of Her voice. While embraced by Kṛṣṇa, Radhika tried to hide Her emotions by hanging Her head shyly in a beautiful manner. Due to Her fresh youthfulness, Radhika appeared intoxicated in bliss. With great difficulty She tolerated the surging waves of *madhura rasa* moving deep within Her heart. It seemed as if some inauspicious planet appearing as Her lovers’ longing for conjugal union opposed Her.

Meanwhile, the *sakhis* standing near the door of the *kunja* conversed among themselves while observing this wonderful scene. One *sakhi* said, “It seems as if Cupid has become bewildered about his duty in this pleasure pastime of the Divine Couple. Yet on the other side, Radhika’s long-standing desire for love has now fructified and is filling Her with grief. Alas! Such are the ways of love. In both the states of happiness and distress the desires of Radhika’s heart have become unbearable.”

The *sakhis* watched Radhika collapse in defeat during Her love battle with Syama. Radhika's loud forceful exhalations sounded like a stormy wind. Both Her hair braid and the knot of Her waistcloth, which upheld the wealth of Her pride loosened. But Radhika tried to protect the wealth of Her pride by holding up Her waistcloth with one hand. Her favorite necklaces broke and scattered during the love battle. Despite Her confusion, Radhika hastily tried to redress and ornament Herself.

Even though Radhika felt satiated in transcendental bliss, Kṛṣṇa still craved for more lovemaking. With various intimate gestures, however, Kṛṣṇa brought Their pastimes of love to a close. Then He personally braided Radhika's hair and restrung Her broken pearl necklace. After retying the knot of Her waistcloth, Syama removed the drops of perspiration from Radha's forehead with the cooling touch of His lotus palm. Then He whispered sweet words of love that filled Radha's heart with endless joy.

Seeing Radhika in that state, the *sakhis* showed their approval with affectionate glances. They talked about Radhika's recent love festival with great excitement and just loud enough for Radha to hear. Relaxing a bit, Radhika casually glanced in the direction of the *sakhis*. But feeling shy about Her recent pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, Radhika, whose face outshines the full moon, hung Her head down. From time to time Radhika countered the looks of the *sakhis* with Her own sidelong glances that said, "Why did you trap Me with Him and thereby destroy My chastity?"

The *sakhis* jokingly replied, "The night is almost over, so now let us go home. Let Your lessons in lovemaking from the *guru* of conjugal union come to a close. Now leave Your pleasure bed behind."

Pretending to be angry, Radhika curved Her eyebrows while simultaneously twirling a play-lotus in Her hand. Then She replied to the *sakhis* in a voice mixed with laughter and chastisement. Even though Radha's mind floated in joy, She showed a touch of anger while smiling slightly and speaking to the *sakhis*, "Like You, I have acted as the heroine in the drama wherein Kṛṣṇa played the hero. Today I became a play doll in your hands. I willfully gave up My independence. Although you have instructed Me in this particular art, I have dutifully followed your words as if directed by Providence. Now please tell Me among the *sakhis* who came inside the *kunja* and who did not come?"

Kṛṣṇa felt great pleasure by witnessing these exchanges. He praised Radhika for exhibiting such an enchanting variety of loving moods. After hearing the tender words of Radhika, Kṛṣṇa, who removes the distress of everyone, who enjoys the rarely attained state of perfect bliss, yet whose own mind now reeled in distress said, “O *sakhis*! O personified forms of auspiciousness! By Your mercy I have become free from grief by drinking the nectar flow of Your words.” Then overwhelmed by love and affection, Kṛṣṇa showed His appreciation by warmly embracing each of the *sakhis*.

Radhika happily observed this, and spoke some joking words that filled the ears with drops of nectar. Radharani said, “O *sakhis*! Presently, Your mental illness appears to be cured. Your tendency to find the faults in others is now gone. You are no longer making fun of others.”

Surprisingly enough, the *sakhis* who performed the joyful service of uniting Radha and Kṛṣṇa also tasted the same transcendental pleasure as Radharani. Although their dearest *sakhi* no longer relished intimate pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, it somehow appeared to them that She still enjoyed such conjugal happiness. Though the night served in the best way possible by being dark, the *gopis* called it *dosha* (full of faults) for they only had another hour to spend with Kṛṣṇa. They encountered severe unhappiness over the impending separation. For soon they would take Radhika out of Kṛṣṇa’s *kunja* and lead Her home.

After returning to Yavat early that morning Radhika became happy and amazed upon seeing Syama-sakhi, whose lips were beautified by the rays of her tender sweet smile. Syama-sakhi started reiterating the previous night’s pastimes so that Radhika could again relish the association of Kṛṣṇa. But Radha felt shy and hung Her head in embarrassment when hearing about Her first intimate meeting with Kṛṣṇa. Due to having received Kṛṣṇa’s love, however, Radhika felt that She had attained a priceless jewel from the ocean of unlimited good fortune.

Syama-sakhi spoke softly to Radhika, “O Kalavati! (expert in all arts) Please tell us why You are acting so shyly because of Your recent activities? The world has never seen the unique type of bashfulness that You are showing. O, look! What a shame! Everyone will think that You have enacted a drama full of unending joy. Moreover, Your weary body clearly tells the story of Your total exhaustion from enjoying Your dearest.

“Your two arms, like the stems of the lotus, hang limply after losing their strength. Your lips are pallid, devoid of their attractive red color. The expertly drawn leaf designs on Your cheeks have been broken and destroyed. Please tell us what new arts You are now studying? What disaster has befallen You?

“You who are like a fresh tender creeper have been thrown down suddenly by a high wind, and trampled like a lotus smashed by an elephant. You look like a fresh tender sweet garland that has been ravaged by a swarm of intoxicated bees. Please tell us, O *sakhi* Radhe! O embodiment of love! You must have fulfilled that difficult to attain, long cherished desire of Yours. How could it be otherwise? How else could the vines of the tree of our good fortune bear fruit?”

Radhika reacted to Syama-sakhi’s direct, boldly presented questions by giving up all deceit and becoming straightforward. Since Syama-sakhi had now revealed everything, Radharani could no longer hide the facts. Feeling somewhat surprised, Radhika covered Her face with the edge of Her *sari* and spoke to Her smiling companion, “O lotus-eyed Syame! How can I tell you where I have been or where I am going? And where is the path? Who has led Me to His side and what happened to Me after meeting Him there? Had I known all these things, O *sakhi*, then how could it remain unknown to you?

“Alas! What is that which is beyond the reach of the mind and beyond the realm of thought? Is it magic, a dream, or just a long period of bewilderment? Does He bring pleasure, distress, or both? Or is He beyond all of these? I cannot tell at all. But He makes My heart palpitate and then I fall unconscious. Only this much impression remains within Me.”

While smiling, Syama-sakhi jokingly said, “O Radhe, whose eyes defeat the blue lotus! Indeed this is true that one cannot become a master in the art of love. Therefore, to become somewhat learned in this field one must take lessons from a *guru* of conjugal union.”

Radhika, who is endowed with good fortune, watched the ocean of Her joy churn into ecstasy and surge with waves from the rising full moon of Syama-sakhi’s joking words. Tasting a special mellow, Radhika said, “O beautiful one! From now on I will not go anywhere near Him or even lay

My eyes on Him. O intelligent one! But you can go and take regular lessons from that *guru* of conjugal union. Seeing Your scholarship will give Me great delight.”

While replying to Syama-sakhi the brilliant moon rays of laughing and joking continually bathed the lips of Radha. At this time, Lalita-sakhi spoke some charming words, “O Radhe! You are certainly worshipable. Your proposal that Syama-sakhi learns the art of loving mellows is befitting. But if she stops her studies before mastering the subject, how will the other students be inspired to go on studying? Therefore, I tell You, o slender-waisted Radhe! You should go with Syama-sakhi and also take many lessons from that *guru* of conjugal union.”

Suddenly Kutila, Radharani’s sister-in-law who speaks bitter words, arrived there like the appearance of an untimely windstorm. The *sakhis* became very cautious and quiet upon seeing her. Among the *sakhis*, Lalita, who is brilliantly perceptive, pretended to be teaching some lessons to the *sakhis* as if reading from a textbook. She continued reading without stopping or changing her voice. Taking charge, Lalita spoke in a hidden way so that the crooked Kutila could not detect the real meaning of their discussion.

Lalita read, “Upon enrolling in school the student acted obediently toward her teacher and went on taking lessons.” Kutila, whose nature is sharp and cutting, became suspicious seeing the *sakhis* rejoicing so much over Lalita’s reading.

Kutila: “Lalite! What are you teaching here?”

Lalita: “We are teaching the principle of surrender to the *guru*.”

Kutila: “What is the meaning of what you just read about the disciple and other things?”

Lalita: “She learned what her *guru* taught Her, but then She left the teachings. Actually that lesson cannot be learned alone. That is why I told her that it is better to learn along with someone. Therefore, I instructed Her to take Syama-sakhi along with Her to learn the lesson.”

Kutila: “What is the matter? I see that these days you have become very busy in associating with other people (inner meaning: associating with men other than your husbands).”

Syama-sakhi: “What do you mean? From their childhood the *sakhis* have been joyfully engaged in worshiping the lords of other planets. So Kutila, why did you say that just these days they are worshiping or associating with others?”

Kutila: “O Syame! I see you do not know that the *gopis* are strongly attached to Syama (*syama anuraginah*).”

Syama: “O Kutila! It is well known that from their childhood these *gopis* are attached to me (*syama anuraginah*).”

Kutila: “These *gopis* are always expert in the art of taking the side of Kṛṣṇa (*Kṛṣṇa pakha vati kala*).”

Syama: “This cannot be, because the moon diminishes in phases to darkness (*Kṛṣṇa pakha vati kala*) and it loses its beauty.”

Kutila: “They all follow Kṛṣṇa (*Kṛṣṇa varta gah*).”

Syama: “*Are!* What? How is that you are discussing the forest fire (*Kṛṣṇa varta gah*) that appeared the night after Kṛṣṇa subdued Kaliya?”

Kutila: “Are you testing me? Definitely the *gopis* are lovers of that one, Kṛṣṇa, who wears yellow garments (*pitambara anuraginah*).”

Syama: “Do not speak so rashly. What you are saying is just the opposite of what can be directly seen. It is easy to see that the *gopis* like blue cloth with a reddish hue (*nilaruna ambara*).”

Kutila: “O Syame! In various ways, the *gopis* are bound by their love to the son of the King of Vrndavana (*vraja raja tanaye*). Do you believe my words?”

Syame: “No, you are absolutely wrong! How is it possible that they will take the silver ornaments of Vrndavana (*vraja raja tanaye*), since they already possess valuable jewels?”

Kutila: “The minds of all the *gopis* have been stolen (*harina*) by Kṛṣṇa.”

Syama: “What? Why are you talking about deer (*harina*)? That is why I am saying, ‘O you talkative one.’ You are repeatedly speaking witty words (*vidagdha*). But you are not qualified to speak like this, so do not speak anymore.”

Kutila: “You are right. I do not have the capacity to speak like a witty person (*vidagdha*). If anybody can speak cleverly, then surely you can. Your

witty intelligence (*vidagdhi*) is burning up (*vidagdha*) my mind. All right! Then please tell me why Radhika's body never displayed these characteristics before?

Syama: "There is a *devata* well known as Candrasekhara who never complains, who makes the deer eyed one fortunate, and who has a half-moon symbol on his head. This one worships Him with great determination. That is why Her tender, flower-soft body has become pale and lifeless."

Kutila: "Where is that *devata*?"

Syame: "Well recently He became well-behaved and now resides in Her mind. Please believe me, you need not worry about Her any longer."

While they talked like this, the rainy season appeared with all its rich and varied flavors. At that time Candravali, whose face defeats the beauty of the moon, glowed with attachment to Kṛṣṇa and the freshness of youth. She and her *sakhis* enjoyed Kṛṣṇa's association. When Candravali experienced ecstatic symptoms due to Kṛṣṇa's love, the bodies of her *sakhis* also displayed the same ecstatic transformations. In their own way the chaste housewives of Vrndavana also relished the sweet mellow of that unending love. But since their families acted unfavorably, they hesitated to show their attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

By exhibiting various playful arts the lotus-faced *gopis* enjoyed the refreshing association of Kṛṣṇa. The darling son of the king of Vrndavana is witty and expert in different arts, especially the confidential art of lovemaking. Thus during the rainy season, which is full of variegatedness, Kṛṣṇa wandered playfully in the hearts of the *gopis* relishing the finer sentiments of love.

Every morning during the rainy season Kṛṣṇa remained with His parents and the cows stayed in the *goshallas* until it stopped raining. Kṛṣṇa reciprocated favorably with His parents by allowing them to fondle and caress Him. The cows went out to pasture as soon as the sky cleared. In the evening the cows returned along with Kṛṣṇa and His attractive cowherd boyfriends who would behave cordially with their elders at that time. In the middle of the day and late at night Kṛṣṇa joyfully associated with the *gopis*.

The Autumn Season

Kṛṣṇa relished the arrival of the autumn season with great enthusiasm. There is no need of clouds in the *sarad* season (autumn). So feeling dejected, the clouds turn their backs and vacate the sky over Vṛndavana. The *sarad* season appeared just a wife, whose mind floods with happiness as she anxiously tries to please her husband with her service. The long-billed storks of this season looked as beautiful as the cheerful face of a newly-married housewife.

Full of clear water and inhabited by many types of colorful birds, the reservoirs resembled chaste housewives full of the wealth of pure love. The rows of pleasant and jubilant swans on the ground looked like a ridge of white mountains appearing as the feet of autumn personified. The singing storks formed the waist belt of autumn. The abundance of blossoming blue lotus flowers appeared like the attractive blue eyes of a newly married girl enchanting the eyes and mind of her husband.

The fully cleansed earth and the crystal clear sky overhead resembled the pure mind of a sage. The *catkins* growing in the lakes exploded their white cottonseeds in all directions like the spreading fame of the Lord. It seemed as if the moon had been rubbed on a polishing stone to produce an extraordinary brilliant effulgence. The twinkling stars in the sky appeared like ointments smeared on the body of autumn personified.

The sweet fragrance of *chatima* flowers enhanced the beauty of the forest. The rains falling from the garland of joyful clouds gradually reduced like the love sulk of a delighted lady that wanes with time. After the dark clouds of the rainy season departed, the sky hosted a covering of thin clouds resembling fine white cloth. The sky looked like a woman wearing the dress of an ascetic. With all these decorations the bride in the form of the autumn season looked exquisitely beautiful.

Due to separation from her rain cloud friends, the joyful waves of the river danced no longer due to the shortage of water. Many small and slow moving rivulets replaced the gushing main stream of the river, which dried up in autumn. The transparent river water seemed to reveal the pure tendency of her heart. The various migratory birds wandering along the dried banks of the river unconsciously decorated the ground with artistic lines drawn by their beaks and feet. Quacking ducks, storks, *cakravakas*, and intoxicated swans beautified the river.

The beautiful scenery of the *sarad* season attracted the denizens of heaven. Even Sarasvati herself could not describe the extent of Vrndavana's incredible elegance. Acting as an expert dance instructor, the wind directed the pure white lotus flowers to gently rock back and forth in the river. As it passed over the slowly moving water, the wind became cool and scented with lotus pollen. This gentle aromatic breeze satisfied and enchanted the minds of everyone. Thus the bride in the form of the *sarad* season dressed and ornamented herself in order to worship Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa found great happiness in the juncture of the rainy and autumn seasons. Moving with a delightful gait, Kṛṣṇa pleased all the residents of Vraja with His *darsana* as He took the cows out to pasture. The favorite of Vrndavana affectionately poured His mercy on everyone. As a result, the Vrajavasis felt great satisfaction seeing Kṛṣṇa strolling along playing with His friends. Picking up twigs, wild flowers, mineral dyes, and other gifts of nature, the cowherd boys decorated their beloved friend while walking down the road.

Kṛṣṇa's nature will now be compared and contrasted with the rainy season. As Kṛṣṇa induces lust in the hearts of the *gopis*, similarly, the rains of the rainy season agitate the minds of the flocks of geese flying and squawking overhead. Just as the rainy season incites lusty feelings, similarly, Kṛṣṇa causes His devotees to feel matchless happiness. The *kadamba* flowers bloom in the rainy season and now Kṛṣṇa wears long aromatic garlands of *kadamba* flowers. The rainy season is beautified with the fanned tails of intoxicated dancing peacocks. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa looks elegant with His crest of fresh, iridescent peacock feathers.

Lightning bolts enhance the beauty of the dark blue sky in the rainy season. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa's gorgeous yellow dress derides the brilliance of gold rubbed on a testing stone. As the monsoon sky glitters radiantly, similarly, Kṛṣṇa possesses a brilliantly handsome aura. Holding His *murali* to His ruby lips, Kṛṣṇa vibrates enchanting sounds resembling the low rumbling of thunder, which attract the peacocks to dance around Him. The deer, birds, and other animals never become satiated even after repeatedly relishing that sweet sound. The sound of His flute causes the water trickling out of the mouths of mountain caves to expand into huge reservoirs. Trees and creepers transform into liquid *rasa*.

Rivers stop moving, back up, and swell in all directions to flood the surrounding land with lotus flowers. Although the flooding washes away the riverbanks, they magically reappear when Kṛṣṇa plays His flute again. Joyful Kṛṣṇa always gives happiness to everyone. At this time He suffers in separation from the beloved doe-eyed *gopis* who have shot Him with the arrows of their sidelong glances. Thus Kṛṣṇa causes the meeting of the rainy season with autumn which brings a fresh taste of *rasa*.

A peacock feather accented the beautiful locks of Kṛṣṇa's curly dark hair. *Karnikara* flowers hung over His ears, which held glittering golden earrings that dangled attractively on His cheeks. Wrapped in an effulgent golden *dhoti*, Kṛṣṇa looked extremely charming with the *vaijayanti* garland hanging from His neck. Dressed as the best of dancers, the all-attractive Lord Kṛṣṇa entered the village of Vrndavana.

The Glorious Flute of Kṛṣṇa

While ambling along the pathway, Kṛṣṇa left the wonderful marks of a goad, lotus, conch, thunderbolt, and the other symbols of His lotus feet on the breast of Mother Earth. Holding the flute to His leaf-like lips, Kṛṣṇa played a slow *raga* known as *mallavasri* just fit for the autumn season. Kṛṣṇa's lips, red as *bimba* fruits, drank the nectar of His flute as His fingers danced deftly over its holes. The abundant flow of nectar emanating from the belly of the flute spread throughout the atmosphere. Besides the intended *raga* of *mallavasri*, the flute seemed to produce a variety of personified tunes.

Kṛṣṇa's face looked very attractive, brightened by His beautiful white teeth shining within His fresh leaf-like lips. Receiving a kiss from Kṛṣṇa's dazzling smiling face, the flute enjoyed the same fortune as His charming lovers. Indeed the *murali* is devoid of defects, even though full of holes. It is astonishing that this hard flute softens the hearts of heartless people, and silences the deer, birds, and other forest animals. Though derived from bamboo (*vamsa*) or a good family (*vamsa*) like the Candra vamsa dynasty, it infects all chaste women with intense attachment to Madhupati.

Aho! Just see this *murali* of Murari! Although hollow, it holds a stream of *ragas*. It is formed from one section (*parva*) of a tree, but it initiates hundreds of festivals (*parvani*). The sweet sound of the *murali*

simultaneously stuns the whole universe and fills everyone with joy. Murari's sweet flute melodies engage the three worlds in marvelous pastimes. Entering within the ears, the vibration of Murari's flute agitates one's body, mind, and senses.

By nature Kṛṣṇa's flute is simple and sweet, but according to the mood of the listener it manifests as nectar to some and poison to others. It causes river water to freeze solid and hard mountains to melt into rivers of ecstasy. Dead trees spring to life with fresh green leaves. Sages fixed in Brahman become restless and agitated. Among relishable objects, the best thing is the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, which completely maddens one in bliss. It removes the anxieties of all people and stops the movements of birds and animals. Thus the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute is a treasure house of wonders. All glories to the superexcellent vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute!

Although there were unlimited groups of gorgeous *gopis*, they all had the great fortune of achieving the highest stage of love for Kṛṣṇa. The *gopis* had peaceful natures and the same object of meditation, namely the desire to attain Kṛṣṇa. These splendid beauties of Vrndavana prayed only for Kṛṣṇa's supreme friendship. With great yearning they looked in the direction of the flute and embraced each other due to the sudden derangement of their minds. Overwhelmed with ecstasy, they uttered some sweet words to describe the transcendental qualities of Kṛṣṇa. In this way, the Vraja *gopis* passed the day glorifying their beloved with poetic compositions.

The leaders of each group of *gopis* spoke two verses of praise. But they felt apprehensive about revealing their inner moods before the common people. To avoid explicitly explaining their intimate pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, they spoke in a hidden but humorous way.

One *gopi* said, "How can I properly describe the fortune of one having eyes. To see Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vrndavana is the ultimate limit of vision. Wandering in Vrndavana, Kṛṣṇa pierces the hearts of everyone with His restless sidelong glances. Those who see Kṛṣṇa like this feel their bliss rise to the zenith. The sound of His flute makes the whole world impatient. Those who have seen the inexhaustible beauty of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama tending Their cows are the most fortunate people in the world. But alas! We have been deprived of this good fortune.

“Beautiful peacock feathers caress Their crowns and garlands swing from Their necks to ornament Their elegant forms. Radiant *tilaka* made from various colored mineral powders graces Their foreheads. Bouquets of small creepers and flowers ornament Their bodies. Thus Kṛṣṇa and Balarama please the eyes of everyone with their charming beauty as They enter Vrndavana just like dramatic actors walking onto a stage.”

A second *sakhi* said, “A person is considered fortunate even if he can see Kṛṣṇa’s lotus face from a distance. One is even more fortunate if he can kiss Him with the corners of his eyes. Hey *sakhi* with a sweet face! That person, however, who drinks the nectar of His lips after He plays the flute is very fortunate. Hey *murali*! I am not lying. You hold a special position. When Syamasundara kisses you, you become overwhelmed and beautified by the touch of His teeth, glimmering white like the rays of the moon. You echo the pleasant sounds of His young lovers at the time of union and thus drive the world mad. Kṛṣṇa’s brightly shining teeth are so beautiful that they look like ripe pomegranate seeds sitting in the middle of a lotus flower or precious rubies embedded in the full moon. Of course, these things are impossible, therefore, nothing can compare with the beauty of Kṛṣṇa’s teeth.”

Another *sakhi* said, “The *murali* is acting very boldly because he is tasting the lips of Kṛṣṇa, which are dear to His paramours and meant only for the *gopis*’ enjoyment. But the *murali* must be very fortunate, because even without endeavoring he has easily obtained this rarest jewel. Before His evening bath Kṛṣṇa kisses His flute and imbibes a sweet *rasa*. The union of Kṛṣṇa and His flute produces a nectar that makes the Yamuna ecstatic, turn solid, and burst forth with blossoming lotuses. Feeling proud of their son the flute, the bamboo trees along her bank shed tears of love in the form of honey dripping down their trunks.”

Another *gopi*, desiring eternal association with Kṛṣṇa yet fearing impending separation, said, “The fortunate earth holds a position higher than Brahmaloaka. She is supremely worshipable because Kṛṣṇa marks her with His splendid footprints like an independent lover drawing designs on the breasts of His beloved. The endless flow of nectar from Kṛṣṇa’s flute has transformed the heart of Mother Earth. As one in ecstasy experiences erect bodily hairs and thrill-bumps, similarly, the grasses covering the earth stand

straight up in shoots. The glories of Vrndavana are far beyond the comprehension of a person like me. Here the peacocks, feeling joyful at heart, begin gently dancing when they hear the sweet sound of Murari's *murali*. Stunned by that sound, the soft leaves of the creepers blowing in the wind become motionless."

Another *gopi* group leader, longing to see Kṛṣṇa, said, "O *sakhi*! The deer and doe must have performed severe penances and austerities in order to always hear Kṛṣṇa's melodious flute and see His gorgeous face with their large innocent eyes. Now we can appreciate the extent of their fortune. Hey *sakhi*! Aho, look! Even the female parrots are more fortunate than we are. Without any fear or inhibition they enjoy the lotus face of Kṛṣṇa, which sends forth the nectarean sound of His flute, along with their husbands. Hence they have achieved the highest perfection of the eyes.

"The wives of the demigods and their husbands, who are deeply attached to them, are very fortunate because they have already developed love for Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, they are always attracted to the captivating form of Kṛṣṇa, and feel extremely impatient upon hearing His enchanting flute. Losing all composure, the demigoddesses become unsteady. And even while flying in the sky their hair braids loosen and the knots of their waistcloths slacken. In this agitated condition of love, they forget to drop soothing flowers, and shower Kṛṣṇa with tears of love instead.

"When the cows hear Kṛṣṇa's flute they cock their ears in rapt attention and close their eyes in bliss. The sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute enters their ears like a constant flow of nectar. In such a state the cows appear like statues painted on a canvas. As the cows become inert from the captivating sound, their teeth look very beautiful with the half-chewed sprouts hanging out of their mouths. While holding their mothers' udders the calves neither suck milk, nor let go, or swallow the milk already in their mouths. The pleasing sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute steals the minds of the cows and fills them with satisfaction. At that time Mother Earth happily drinks the milk automatically streaming from the cow's udders."

"Hey *sakhi*! Abandoning their usual flighty nature, the birds of Vrndavana listen attentively to the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute while relishing the beauty of His transcendental form. With their eyes closed in meditation on the music, they look just like sages steeped in bliss. Hey *sakhi*! They have

stopped flying, singing, and eating. Becoming fully absorbed in tasting the pleasant sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, the birds have fluffed out their feathers due to ecstatic feelings of devotion.

“Listening to the sweet sound of the *murali*, the Yamuna and other rivers are intensely agitated and spinning in whirlpools. It seems they have been struck by Cupid's arrows and affected by a type of epilepsy. The swans and *cakravakas* rolling in the waves of the river look like the disarrayed clothing of the river. The sandy banks look like the unclothed hips of the river. The bubbles on the surface seem like foam forming on the mouth of the river.

“Hey *sakhi*! The rivers, shivered in ecstasy from hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute, are holding lotus flowers in the hands of their waves to offer Him *puspanjali*. In the mood of His lovers, the rivers respectfully offer cool water to happily bathe Kṛṣṇa's feet, and remove the heat of walking on the burning earth of summer. The clouds, acting like friendly *sakhis*, cool down the hot air by pouring tiny drops of water upon His head.

Observing that every living entity was nicely serving Kṛṣṇa except herself, one sad *gopi* said, “Even the cloud, which is an unconscious entity, can show his affection by moving here and there to act as an umbrella shielding Kṛṣṇa from the scorching rays of the sun. When Kṛṣṇa plays His flute, the clouds remove the fatigue of cow herding by pouring tiny streams of water from all directions, which seem like a shower of camphor dust. Just see, only we have been cheated from tasting the sweetness of serving Kṛṣṇa, which is being relished by everyone in the universe.”

Then the best of the *gopis*, thinking like this and feeling an arousal of enchanting love at the same time, said, “Just see the fortune of the Pulindas (aborigine women). They thoroughly enjoy smearing their faces and breasts with the *kunkuma* fallen onto the grass from Kṛṣṇa's feet that once adorned the breasts of His dearest *sakhi*. To relish Kṛṣṇa's sweetness is the object of everyone's desire. Though the Pulindas are mere aborigines, we cannot say that they do not deserve such fortune. It is quite proper that the Pulinda women have genuine attachment to Kṛṣṇa. Such signs of greed indicate the extent of one's real attachment to Kṛṣṇa. Though one feels totally unqualified for such attainment, the greed for Kṛṣṇa remains.”

While speaking of the Pulindas, that *gopi* remembered the fortune of Govardhana Hill, and revealed to a friend Her intense desire to meet Kṛṣṇa. She said, “This Govardhana Hill enhances Madhava’s pastimes by supplying roots, fruits, water, mineral colors, and caves to hide in. In this way Govardhana is the best servitor of the Lord. It is known that by serving a great devotee one can attain Visnu. By his selfless service Govardhana has brought Kṛṣṇa under his control.”

Then that chief among the *gopis* indicated Her desire to meet Kṛṣṇa by speaking to a friend. “O *sakhi*! It is our opinion that Kṛṣṇa fulfills the desires and relieves the thirst of those who take shelter of Govardhana Hill. This fact is also supported by *sastric* evidence.”

The unmarried *gopis* headed by Dhanya-sakhi showed their great fortune by manifesting their ongoing strong attachment to Kṛṣṇa. The astonishing power of their yearning for Kṛṣṇa revealed itself in newer and newer ways. But this secret longing for Kṛṣṇa created a sense of bewilderment in their minds. Even experts in loving affairs cannot understand the intensity of the *gopis*’ desire. Just hearing the flute song of Kṛṣṇa paralyzed their senses, hands, and feet. The unpredictable nature of *prema* put them in this embarrassing position.

Overwhelmed in love for Kṛṣṇa, they embraced each other and spoke as follows, “O *sakhi*! The sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute is a powerful *yogi* transforming the nature of reality with his *mantra*. It makes the conscious become unconscious and gives life to the lifeless. O *sakhi*! Look! All the aquatics, birds, and deer remain stunned like statues. The trees, earth, and mountains melt into liquid and the hairs on their bodies stand erect.”

Seeing the flute’s ability to drastically alter the state of other moving and nonmoving entities, the *gopis* worried about upholding their vows.

The *gopis* said, “Can any young woman possibly stop the low sound of that resonating flute which the enemy of Kaliya started playing upon attaining youth? It is so terrible that it brings about a state of death like that induced by drinking poison. Rather than stopping it, we simply become play things in the hands of that flute. That flute sound is the blemish on our family. But if we cannot hear it, then we die in the pain of separation.

“Agonized by this painful separation, we absorb our minds in remembering the prince of Vrndavana, the Lord of our hearts. His fickle mind is always agitated by lust. So everyday He proudly displays the attracting power of His flute song and enjoys a festival beneath the trees of Vrndavana. But still the residents of Vrndavana always offer Him the greatest respect. With the sweetness of His bodily effulgence He pleases all living entities and satisfies the world.

“When will we smell Kṛṣṇa’s sweet lotus face framed by the thick, glossy locks of His dark blue hair? His eyebrows dance on His broad forehead and His nose is beautifully raised. When an object falls into an ocean of sweetness, it also manifests sweetness. Similarly, the yellow rope draped attractively on His turban, which Murari uses for tying cows, has become joyful by contacting His blissful form.

“Moreover, the young *gopis*, who worship the *tambula* scented lips of Kṛṣṇa that are bordered by His cheeks, are supremely fortunate. His dancing *makara kundala* (earrings), studded with jewels and flowers, cast reflections on His cheeks like sparkling bubbles of water. What woman does not desire to embrace the broad chest of Kṛṣṇa, which is adorned with a forest garland, the marks of Laksmi and Srivatsa, and brilliant jewels and pearl necklaces?

“Whose lake of the heart would not become agitated by His two arms, which hang at His sides like the trunks of a pair of intoxicated baby elephants, desiring to snatch the nectar beauty of His knees? Within our hearts we hold His waist which is surrounded by three graceful folds of skin. Although measuring only the size of a fist, Kṛṣṇa’s thin waist is exceedingly powerful and makes us very weak.

“The line of hairs extending from His navel to His broad chest resembles a row of beautiful *kalpa-taru* trees. They look like the fine hairs on the back of a bumblebee, or a black snake that bites our chest when we tightly embrace Him. His elegant feet, marked with a lotus, goad, and thunderbolt defeat the beauty of red lotus flowers. His toes sparkle from the effulgence of His jeweled inlaid anklets. When will those feet be the ornament on our breasts?”

Thus, Dhanya-sakhi and other beautiful young *gopis* disclosed their intense craving to meet Kṛṣṇa. Since *maha-prema* had arisen within them, they manifested so much longing that their throats choked up from the life airs rushing out of their bodies. Tossed by the insurmountable waves of desire to meet Kṛṣṇa, they spent the days of autumn in great difficulty. In this way, the winter season quickly arrived and the *gopis* began to worship Katyayani.

Dhanya-sakhi and other Vraja *kumaris* (virgins) came to the banks of the Yamuna to worship Goddess Uma (Katyayani) during the first month of the winter season known as Margasirsa. At this time, the ripened rice paddy in the fields displayed a mixed color of red and brown. Bent in humility, the rice paddy expressed its desire to drink the water made fragrant from the white lilies blooming nearby. The newly sprouted barley spread a red and brown color across the fields. The growth of anise and bunches of coriander sweetened the earth. Spinach bloomed in household gardens. Fields abundant with sugar cane spread in all directions.

The first month of winter displayed immense splendor with its wealth of agricultural products. The Vraja *kumaris* like Dhanya-sakhi, who possessed unlimited affection for Kṛṣṇa, played the part of *sadhakas* seeking to perfect the purity of their love for Kṛṣṇa. Taking the vow, “May the virtuous son of Nanda Maharaja become our husband,” they secretly worshiped goddess Katyayani in order to attain Kṛṣṇa.

Chapter Twelve: Stealing the Garments of the Gopis

One day, due to their *sadhana*, the intense hope of Dhanya-sakhi and the other attractive Vraja *kumaris* to attain Kṛṣṇa as their husband blossomed like a flower on the desire tree of their hearts. Somehow or other from that very day the parents thought that their daughters would be happy by getting good husbands. So rather than being disturbed, they happily helped their daughters observe the necessary vows to fulfill their natural desire.

With great affection the mothers warned their daughters, “Your young bodies are as delicate as flowering creepers, therefore, you cannot endure painful austerities. How will you be able to suppress the bliss you are feeling within, and suddenly show the determination needed to perform such difficult activities? Since you will not be able to do it, you should not attempt to undergo this vow of worship. We have never seen you do such a thing before.”

Such discouraging words merely increased the *gopis*’ determination. The mothers inquired from their daughters, “O young girls! Who is the *devata* whom you are worshiping? Is it Uma, Umapati, Madhava, Kamala, or Brahma? What type of *puja* are you doing? Is wealth required? Who is the *acarya* directing the chanting of the Vedic *mantras*? Think about this carefully and tell us.”

To stop any further discussion of the subject, which might reveal their hidden intentions to attain Kṛṣṇa, the unmarried *gopis* thought about their mothers’ words and answered modestly, “If any living entity puts his determined faith in any *devata*, than that *devata* will surely fulfill his desires. Therefore, we will satisfy our desires by increasing our worship of goddess Katyayani. We have employed our minds to serve as the best of *acaryas*. His orders will determine our future and bring us to our goal. While waking or sleeping our mental *acarya* is chanting a *mantra* to help us fulfill our purpose.”

Being discouraged by their mothers’ words from performing the Katyayani *vrata*, the *gopis* felt temporarily despondent. Nevertheless, when the first day of the Hemanta season arrived, waves of blissful *rasa* agitated the

ocean of their hearts. With great enthusiasm they collected *havisyanna* and the other articles to execute the *Katyayani vrata*.

The bodies of the *gopis* revealed a distinct type of beauty while undergoing the hardship of the *vrata*. Since they no longer chewed *tambula*, the natural luster of their lips glowed prominently. Though their skin turned somewhat pale and hardened without their daily oil massages, their bodies glistened like fresh *asoka* leaves washed by the rain. Since they no longer applied oil to their hair, it became dull and dry like the minds of the destitute. From eating once a day their bodies became very thin and lost their natural effulgences. Though they still wore gems and jeweled necklaces, their bodies looked as lackluster as the second phase of the dark moon. Seeing the intensity of their penance and their emaciated condition, all the *Vrajavasis* were astonished and felt pity for them.

The burning desire to attain Kṛṣṇa within the minds of the *gopis* interrupted their sleep, and forced them to wake up in the middle of the night. Although insufficient sleep reddened their eyes, they washed their faces, discarded their white sleeping dresses, and put on auspicious pink clothes. While throwing off the lethargy of sleep they joyfully considered, “Following the scriptural injunctions, let us take an early morning bath in the Yamuna.”

Every morning the *gopis* would meet according to the secret agreements they had made the night before. Welcoming each other with respectful words, they embraced and exchanged great love. With their impeccable qualities and graceful lotus stem-like arms the *gopis* looked like an attractive cluster of lotuses walking down the path. Alone they felt shy and hesitant to approach Kṛṣṇa, but as a group they shone with the pride and power of a dazzling cascade of light.

Spreading their radiant effulgences in all directions, the *gopis* appeared like a garland of lightning bolts moving on the earth. Everyday before sunrise these lovely young ladies went to the Yamuna while singing loudly about the qualities of Hari who is forever praised by heavenly demigods like Brahma. Full of rhythm and precise intonations, their voices blended harmoniously with the soft sweet notes of their *vinas*. A sweet smell emanated from their mouths as the *gopis* engaged in *kirtana*. Captivated by that fragrance, swarms of bees flew excitedly toward their lotus faces

hoping to drink the nectar. When the *gopis* blinked their eyes in fear of the buzzing bees, the beauty of their faces greatly increased.

The chiming sounds of their bangles conquered the chirping of love-maddened sparrows. Just as the hot sunshine does not wilt the lotus flowers, the faces of the *gopis* remained fresh and attractive, even though they constantly burned with the desire to meet Kṛṣṇa. The maidservants of the *gopis* followed behind them carrying the finest ingredients for *devi-puja*, which they had collected according to strict rules.

Thus the Vraja *kumaris*, brimming with affection, ignored the restrictions imposed by their elders and proceeded to the bank of the Yamuna. Although Yamuna-devi is the daughter of the sun, who removes all darkness and afflictions, she herself is filled with streams of darkness. With the eyes of her swirling waves, Yamuna-devi could directly perceive the faith of the young women who desired Nandasuta as their husband.

Seeing the agitation caused by their blossoming *prema*, Yamuna-devi wanted to embrace the *gopis* with the playful hands of her waves. Yamuna respectfully said, “O *sakhis*! Come, come!” Then she made a “*jhat! jhat!*” sound with her waves in response to the delicate “*jhat! jhat!*” sound of the *gopis*’ ankle-bells as they quickly ran down the forest path. Understanding the desire of the young girls, Yamuna-devi offered her respects and tenderly looked at the *gopis* from the corners of her lotus flower eyes.

The rays of the rising sun instigated pleasure pastimes among the pairs of reunited *cakravaka* birds who had been separated the night before. Water birds chirped gaily while flying overhead. Upon arriving at the Yamuna, the impatient Vraja *kumaris* immediately threw off their woolen shawls. Covered by thin white cotton bathing outfits, the blissful bodies of the *gopis* looked more beautiful than a stream of falling snow. The *gopis* shivered and softly sighed due to the chilly morning air. The quivering of their leaf bud-like lips revealed the splendor of their pearly white teeth.

The *gopis* smiled gently and giggled upon noticing their friends feeling the same way. Reacting to the biting cold, the *gopis* made a comic scene by slapping their arms and crossing their legs in various contorted postures. Commencing their *vrata*, the Vraja *kumaris* offered obeisances to Kalindi before bathing. Climbing down the bank, they slowly entered the water.

Ignoring the cold, they followed all the prescribed rules and completed their baths. Then they joyfully ran back up the banks of the Yamuna. After coming out of the Yamuna the *gopis* felt elated over courageously tolerating the painful cold water.

The water dripping from the garments on the limbs of the young, beautiful, doe-eye *gopis* with pretty smiles fell onto the earth. It seemed that their bodies wept golden tears after being tortured by the cold black waters of the Yamuna. The water birds that had spent their youth among the blooming lotus flowers in the Yamuna saw these drops as the wonderful essence of nectarean beauty. The shimmering light emanating from their golden bodies made the *gopis* look like blissful embodiments of the goddess of fortune. The water previously caught in their hair now poured out rapidly. It appeared as if the *gopis* cried out of fear.

As they gracefully dried themselves with small towels, the *gopis* looked very beautiful. After removing the water from their bodies the *gopis* compassionately gave up their enmity toward the cold water. While drying and arranging their hair, it seemed that the *gopis* were showing affection to their weeping hair. The desirable Vraja *kumaris* had achieved a unique position due to their sweet beauty and refulgent golden complexions.

After bathing and drying their creeper-like bodies, the *gopis* looked even more beautiful as they filled their lotus mouths with the sweet name of Kṛṣṇa. Even Laksmi-devi could not surpass their fortune. While dressing in fresh clothes, they thoroughly immersed their minds in remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. The borders of their dresses were ornamented with attractive lacing of gold and silver threads. After tying up their hair, the *gopis*, who are expert in various arts, proceeded to a special place on the bank of the Yamuna.

They occasionally sighed from the cold while carrying the *puja* paraphernalia that they had painstakingly gathered. The sweet fragrance of their breath attracted swarms of bees. But the *gopis* felt nervous and twitched their eyebrows because they could not tolerate the cold wind generated by the wings of those bees. Feeling compassionate, Surya-deva gradually dispelled their chill by caressing them with his gentle warm rays. Thus, Surya-deva showed more affection to the *gopis* than to his own daughter Yamuna-devi.

The *gopis* set the excellent *puja* items on the sandy white banks of the Yamuna, which glistened like camphor powder. They chose a clean, quiet place for *puja*. It was a secluded location undisturbed by the wind, and free from the contamination of Yamuna foam and the footprints of birds and animals. Desiring to make a *murti* of goddess Katyayani out of sand, the highly qualified *gopis* spoke in sweet voices resembling the soft cooing of cuckoos.

One *gopi* said, “O my friends! We have never observed the Katyayani *vrata*. Before initiating this auspicious act, we should remove the evil elements from the atmosphere. Are we going to conduct the worship individually or all together? Let us decide in such a way that we do not end up with a disaster. With faith and intelligence we should take decision.”

Another *sakhi* said, “We should do the *puja* all together in a group. To perform *puja* separately is not good. Worshiping together will be more beneficial.”

The experts in *puja* chanted sweet verses praising Kṛṣṇa’s attributes while offering handfuls of fragrant flowers to a *murti* of Katyayani molded from sand. Seeing the elegant *murti*, the *gopis* felt that Bhagavati Katyayani herself had appeared in that *murti*. The *gopis* thought, “How fortunate we are to perceive goddess Bhagavati, even though we have not yet installed the deity.” Feeling that they had satisfied Devi Katyayani, the *gopis* felt elated. This strengthened their determination to execute the vow. To properly please Katyayani, the *gopis* did *manasi puja* of the *murti* before commencing the worship. While concealing the confidential desires within their hearts and controlling their minds, the *gopis* silently fetched water from the Yamuna. The *gopis* kept Kṛṣṇa locked inside their hearts like a precious treasure. After washing their hands and doing *acamana* they sat down on *kusa asanas*. Fixing their minds in the mode of goodness, the *gopis* silently worshiped Katyayani. To invoke Katyayani’s presence in the *murti*, the expert *pujaris* respectfully uttered the *mantra*:

***ihā gacchā gaccha devī, sannidhānam ihācarah,
Kṛṣṇasya sannidhānam naha, prāpayasva namo namah.***

“Come Devi, please enter this *murti*. Please help us come close to Kṛṣṇa. We pay obeisances to you again and again.”

After invoking Katyayani-devi in this way, the young *gopis* carefully placed an *asana* before her. With great bliss they humbly requested the glorious Katyayani, “Welcome Devi! We offer our heartfelt respects to you. Please accept this splendid *asana*. O Devi! May your visit be auspicious. We secretly request you to be merciful to us and bring Kṛṣṇa before us.”

While bathing Katyayani’s feet in water mixed with the appropriate ingredients the *gopis* said, “O completely pure Durga! Please accept this worship of your feet. May our breasts be cooled by this foot water, which reminds us of Kṛṣṇa’s perspiration. Please help us meet our beloved Kṛṣṇa.”

Following the foot wash, the Vraja *kumaris* offered priceless *arghya* (auspicious hand wash) made of selected items gathered according to *sastric* rules. “O Devi! You are worshipable by all the demigods. We offer this *arghya* in hopes that you will soon award us the association of Kṛṣṇa who is our *maha-arghya*.”

After *arghya* the *gopis* presented *acamana* (mouthwash). “O Devi! We offer this pleasant *acamana* to you in hopes that we will be able to taste Kṛṣṇa.” Then they offered *madhuparka* (a pleasant drink composed of honey, *ghee*, and yogurt) saying, “O Devi! We offer you this sweet *madhuparka* with the desire to taste Kṛṣṇa’s honey sweet lips.”

Absorbed in *samadhi* and overcome with *prema-rasa*, those young, pure-hearted girls with thin waists offered *acamana* again while saying, “We offer you this *acamana* with the desire to repeatedly drink the nectar from Kṛṣṇa’s lotus mouth.”

They brought aromatic oil in a jeweled container for massaging the body. Even without any wind it automatically dispersed its rich fragrance through the air. It was an attractive deep red oil just suitable for massage. The *gopis* said, “O Devi! Please accept this oil for massaging your body. Please attach our bodies, which are saturated with *prema*, to each of Kṛṣṇa’s limbs.”

To remove the oil they used a soft scented powder, which seemed like a spray from a fountain of concentrated bliss. While doing this the *gopis* said, “We offer this fragrant powder to you. Please remove our sorrow by giving us the association of Kṛṣṇa.” They respectfully offered bathing water scented with the finest camphor and kept in a golden vessel. “We offer you

this finely scented bath water. Please arrange for us to bathe in the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's association."

The Vraja *kumaris* very methodically offered a neatly folded *sari* woven with golden threads. "O Devi! Please accept this golden *sari*. Please arrange that our clothes will be exchanged with Kṛṣṇa's clothes." They brought the best quality flawless jewels and ornaments made by expert goldsmiths. "Please decorate yourself, O Devi, with these priceless ornaments. And please adorn us with the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's limbs."

The young, lotus-eyed *gopis* brought attractive ointments made of *aguru*, camphor, and musk. "O Devi! We offer you these opulent ointments. Please arrange that our bodies will become anointed with the touch of Kṛṣṇa's limbs."

The air attained good fortune by carrying the pleasing, celestial aromas of the various scents presented by the *gopis*. "O Devi! We offer you these scents which enliven the nostrils. Please make our limbs fragrant with the aroma from Kṛṣṇa's body."

They offered Vṛndavana flowers from all six seasons, which were very colorful, covered with sweet pollen, and surrounded by bees. "O Devi! Let our lips be worshiped by Kṛṣṇa's teeth which conquer the beauty of *kunda* flowers." They offered incense made from black *aguru*, *khus* root, and clusters of the finest *gulgul*, saying, "O Devi! We offer you this pleasing incense smoke. Please show us your effulgence and pacify our burning hearts."

While offering opulent *ghee* lamps mixed with camphor, the *gopis* prayed, "Please illumine the house of our breasts with the lamp of Kṛṣṇa's *kaustubha* jewel."

They offered milk, butter, rock candy, bananas, coconuts, *mung dal*, sun-dried rice, cakes soaked in sugar water, *malpoa*, sweet rice, cooked grains, *amṛta-keli*, and assorted little tasty cakes covered with powdered rock candy icing. While presenting these delicacies to Katyayani the girls prayed, "Please eat all these pure and pleasing food offerings. And please give us the remnants from the lotus mouth of the ever-youthful Kṛṣṇa." Fixing their minds on their goal, the *gopis* chanted the following *mantra* with full feeling:

***kātyāyani mahā-māye, mahā-yoginy adhīśvari, nanda-gopa-
sutaṁ devi, patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ***

“O goddess Katyayani! O great potency of the Lord! O possessor of great mystic power and mighty controller of all! Please make the son of Nanda Maharaja our husband. We offer our obeisances unto you.”

Then they muttered *japa* with clear pronunciation. While offering *tambula* and *acamana* the *gopis* said, “Please relish this *tambula* made of *betel*, cloves, camphor, and cardamom. And please color our lips with the juice of Kṛṣṇa’s *tambula*.”

Performing *arati*, they said, “O Mahesvari! We show these lamps to you in hopes that you will please illumine our limbs with the glow of Kṛṣṇa’s limbs.” After *arati* they gracefully bowed down on the ground and offered eloquent prayers disclosing their minds’ desires. The *gopis* prayed, “O mother of Ganesa! Neither your husband Mahadeva, nor Brahma, nor Brhaspati can offer suitable praise to you, what to speak of others. We are greedy only to taste Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, we glorify you so that you will stop the itching of our tongues. O Mahesvari! Please shower your mercy upon us.

“You are called Yogamaya, the potency of Maha-Visnu, who possesses all energies. You have the power to do the impossible. You are peace, tolerance, nourishment, satisfaction, knowledge and ignorance. Although you bind the living entities, you are the giver of liberation. O mother of all! By your glance the creation, maintenance, and destruction of the world takes place.

“O Devi! You are the pinnacle of all auspiciousness. Your order and glories are sitting like a swan on the heads of all the *devatas*. You are expert in worshiping Kṛṣṇa, and you are the supreme Vaisnavi. O Paramesvari! O supreme goddess! You always engage in the welfare of others. We pay our respects unto you. You perfectly understand the minds of all living entities. So please fulfill our desire to achieve Kṛṣṇa as our husband.”

Upon finishing their personal prayers for that day, the *gopis* paid respects and offered the deity of Katyayani to the Yamuna. Throughout the days and nights of the entire month of the *vrata* the young girls maintained their unswerving zeal. Their throats always sung about Kṛṣṇa’s qualities. As the

days passed the *gopis* offered more items and increased the standard of worship.

Katyayani-devi was pleased with their pure offerings and regular worship. Thus the *gopis* hoped to attain her grace. Indeed, just before the end of the month they received the mercy of Devi. Everyone suspected that the *gopis* wanted wealth like any ordinary human being. But the *gopis* did not want any wealth from their worship of Yogamaya or the *devatas*.

The all-auspicious Katyayani fulfills desires, and bestows mercy and happiness upon those qualified with a pure heart. She reciprocated with the Vraja *kumaris* by appearing within their minds saying, “O auspicious girls! You are the embodiments of Kṛṣṇa’s conjugal attraction. You will attain all good fortune by worshipping Kṛṣṇa. The devotees of Laksmi, who fulfills all desires, do not worship other *devatas* to attain the favor of Laksmi-devi. Your sincere prayer ornaments your heart and indicates your longing for Kṛṣṇa. Your prayers also make me glorious. Very soon you will attain the association of Kṛṣṇa according to your individual tastes. Now you can stop your austerities.” After speaking thus, Katyayani disappeared from their hearts. The words of the goddess greatly increased the *gopis*’ faith.

On the last day of the *vrata*, the *gopis* felt quivering in their left arms, eyes, and thighs. These signs of imminent auspiciousness removed their fatigue, and made them confident of attaining the fruit of their desire to enjoy with Kṛṣṇa. As they considered how to best complete their *vrata*, the sun rose brilliantly in the sky. The lotuses responded by opening happily as the atmosphere saturated with immeasurable joy.

The *gopis* worshiped Devi with countless numbers of the best quality articles. Rejoicing over the successful completion of their *vrata*, the *gopis* liberally offered the various *puja* items. Anticipating the forthcoming result of their austerities, the *gopis* succumbed to a playful mood and stood up excitedly. After receiving the blessings of Katyayani they took off their fancy pure silk *saris* and placed them on some clean ground.

Following the local customs, they bathed naked in the Yamuna. Elated and enthused, the *gopis* joyfully pushed and squeezed each other. Basking under the warm rays of the sun, they were oblivious to the cold water. The blissful

gopis created a captivating scene as they lost themselves in the fun of water sporting.

Meanwhile, according to the previous day's plan, the young cowherd boys walked toward the pastures. Hearing them approaching, the forest birds excitedly flew into the sky. Though Kṛṣṇa is very strong, He is conquered by the intense love of His dear friends like Balarama. Although He is independent, Kṛṣṇa became controlled by the pure love of the *gopis* and thus moved in their direction.

The *prema* of the young *gopis* reached perfection because it had the desire to give bliss to Kṛṣṇa as its only goal. In order to dispel the pain of their longing, Vṛndavana-candra, the master of all masters of mystic *yoga*, showered nectar from His flute. Taking the qualities of the young girls as His necklace, Kṛṣṇa left the happiness of herding the cows and playing with His intimate friends. He went to perform pastimes with the *gopis* in order make the bud of their heart's *prema* blossom into a flower.

The *gopis*' cherished desire to meet Kṛṣṇa had been steadily growing throughout the year. Leaving the company of Balarama and the older boys, Kṛṣṇa took some of His young friends and went to enjoy with the *gopis*. These blissful boys had spotless characters and beautiful forms that resembled toy dolls. Secretly and unseen, Kṛṣṇa arrived amidst the *gopis*. He wanted to award the *gopis* the fruit of their endeavor, and at the same time relish a playful pastime.

Thus Kṛṣṇa, who is the color of a new monsoon cloud, who attracts the *gopis* and is attracted to the *gopis*, who always befriends His devotees, and who gives happiness to all but never inflicts pain on anyone, prepared to enact His pastimes. Kṛṣṇa tied His hair under His turban, pulled up His cloth, and quieted His ankle-bells. With a glaring look Kṛṣṇa silenced the silly talking of His young friends. Then Kṛṣṇa crouched down and cast a few furtive glances while smiling mischievously. Although Kṛṣṇa is an unfathomable reservoir of steadiness and all other good qualities, He often displays a unique type of fickleness.

Adopting the mood of a thief, Kṛṣṇa arrogantly snatched the *gopis*' clothes and slung them over His shoulder. After hushing up His little friends, Kṛṣṇa quickly climbed to the top of a *kadamba* tree. Sitting on a branch, Kṛṣṇa

glanced toward the *gopis* and listened to their talk. At that time, the young *gopis*, who are praised even by the goddess of fortune, desired to stop bathing.

Not seeing their clothes on the bank of the river, the *gopis* thought with surprise, “Who stole our clothes? There is no one here except the rays of the sun, and on the banks there are only the footprints of some water birds. Perhaps the *devatas* have hidden our clothes somewhere, because when they visit they do not touch the earth nor leave any footprints.”

The *gopis* looked fearfully here and there while arguing over the various possibilities. The waves of their sidelong glances skimmed across the surface of the Yamuna. The *gopis* scanned all directions with their wide blue eyes that resembled the petals of a blue lotus. Their unparalleled beauty astounded the whole universe. The glances of the *gopis* resembled rows of glittering *saphari* fish darting to and fro. Not finding their clothes, they submerged in an ocean of sorrow.

Seeing their plight, the young prince of Vrndavana, who removes the sadness of the world, assumed a splendid aura of beauty as He sat on the *kadamba* tree. His natural effulgence easily eclipsed the radiance of the sun. While smiling at His young *gopa* friends, Kṛṣṇa joked with the *gopis* in a sweet, clear voice soaked in a nectar unknown even in the heavenly planets. Kṛṣṇa said, “O young girls, you should not be so disturbed by this. I have stolen your pure sparkling garments just to attract your minds and relish some pleasurable pastimes. Using your pearl necklaces as an offering, give up your pride, and come here alone or come all together to get your clothes.”

The fruit on the vine of the Katyayani *vrata*, which is difficult for others to attain, had now spontaneously ripened for the *gopis*. Drinking the words flowing from Kṛṣṇa’s mouth, which indicated His greed for them, the *gopis* savored a stream of *rasa*-filled nectar. They saw it as an exclusive gift awarded to them on the auspicious completion of their *vrata*. In this way, the *gopis* overcame the fatigue from executing their austere vow.

Lowering their eyelids in shyness, the *gopis* cast sidelong glances to reprimand that expert thief who fulfills all desires. Kṛṣṇa’s appearance seemed like some good fortune arriving at the wrong time. Their extreme

joy forcefully propelled them to Kṛṣṇa, yet simultaneously filled them with confusion. In this state of bewilderment, they ignored the coldness of the water and submerged themselves up to their necks.

They stood silently without yielding to Kṛṣṇa's demand. Those young girls with gleaming teeth and bashful faces thought that Kṛṣṇa might not keep His promise to return their clothes. Whispering amongst themselves, one *gopi* said, "Why not talk to Him and defeat Him with your clever words?" But being controlled by Yogamaya, none of the *gopis* could respond to Kṛṣṇa's request to collect their clothes.

In their silence, the faces of the *gopis*, encircled by dark blue locks of hair, looked like rows of half-open lotuses surrounded by quiet bumblebees. What charm they added to the bank of the Yamuna! For a long time the *gopis* deliberately refused to answer or look toward the *kadamba* tree. Giving up their shyness, which had pervaded them like an internal disease, the *gopis* finally spoke in such a way to show their disgust with Kṛṣṇa's naughty behavior.

The sweet dancing of their lotus eyes and the darting movements of their eyebrows captivated all directions. The *gopis* showed their shyness through their affectionate solicitations and entreaties that appeared both witty and respectful at same time. Their smiling faces created waves of sweetness as their teeth reflected on the water.

One *gopi* said, "Are You not the respectable son of the great king of Vṛndavana who instructs everyone in proper behavior? Are You not the all-attractive ocean of good qualities full of waves of compassion? Are You not the one who distributes wonderful auspiciousness on the earth with the beauty of Your body? Are You not the personified bliss of Vṛndavana illuminating the eyes of everyone with Your effulgent limbs? Are You not indifferent to the excessive praises of others? Are You not learned in all *sastras* and weapons? Are You not the remover of ignorance?"

"Therefore, how could You have suddenly performed such an unjust and abominable act? You should not do such things because You are the most worshipable entity and the benefactor of the world. So why have You done this atrocious act? We deserve Your mercy after having executed such difficult austerities.

“Your conduct spells death to all the virgins in Vrndavana. Why did You steal our splendid garments needed for our *vrata*? Is this Your idea of fun? It will not do You any good, but rather it will make You infamous. You should follow the path of honor and not be unfair. Now return our clothes and maintain Your spotless fame.”

Affected by their pleas and shyness, Kṛṣṇa said, “O lotus-eyed girls! I am not a skillful speaker who is prone to lying. Of course, some eloquent speakers are so habituated to lying that even when telling lies, they repeatedly say it true. Thus people accept their lies as truth. However, it is well known that My nectarean words are always true. Even in joking, I do not conceal the all-auspicious truth. It is not proper to joke, especially with ladies like you who are practicing *vratas*. When I said come and take your beautiful clothes, I was not telling a lie.”

The *gopis* said, “O one who removes intense pain and destroys irreligion. Why are you deviating from the path of *dharma*? Even jokingly a good person never says such things. O deliverer of Gajendra! You are famous for being naturally merciful. But why are You not showing one drop of mercy toward us? Why can’t You sympathize with our suffering?

“You are not considering how to remove the confusion within our intelligence as we stand here up to our necks in ice cold water. It is the nature of village girls that we would rather drown in the Yamuna, than stand naked before You who are afflicting us. We fully understand the inner meaning of Your words.

“O deliverer of harsh words! Please stop speaking. O clever joker! Do not bewilder us with Your wit. We offer respects to Your feet. Actions speak louder than words. O one, whose face defeats the luster of the autumn moon, we are Your servants, and we will obey whatever order You give to test our minds. Give up Your prevailing mood of being a charitable person by donating cloth. Do not turn a well into an ocean of mirth. Now give back our dresses by passing them to Your trustworthy young friends.”

After one *gopi* tried pacifying Kṛṣṇa with these words another *gopi* spoke. Her voice sounded more pleasing than a *vina* or a cuckoo. Although she spoke with the courage of an infantry commander, the vibration of her voice contained an undeniable attraction for Kṛṣṇa.

She said, “It is difficult but we must stick to the path of *dharma*. We young girls of Vrndavana have never before been spoiled by such vile behavior. O perpetrator of injustice! How are such abominable acts going on in the village of Vrndavana? O son of Nanda Maharaja! We request You to counteract this injustice. We are Your servants and are very respectful towards You, but if You persist we will complain to the King of Vrndavana.”

Wearing a necklace on His chest and enjoying the comical situation, Kṛṣṇa smiled gently and said, “O My dear love-saturated *gopis*. It does not befit You to speak like this. Indeed, if you are really My servants, then you must do as I say. Why can’t you follow My sincere and pertinent instructions meant for your benefit? Whether an order is agreeable or disagreeable, a servant must always obey the master’s orders. Therefore, the conclusion is that you should come forward and take your clothes. Do not spoil the reputation of your family. If you do not do what I say, I will not give them back to you. O ignorant ones! And even if the king becomes angry, what can he do?”

Those young unmarried *gopis*, the epitome of good conduct, had praised their beloved with sweet words and served that difficult to achieve the Lord with great affection. Intensely eager to attain Kṛṣṇa, they drank His ambrosial words with the cups of their ears. Because their love for Kṛṣṇa had already matured over a long time, the *gopis* felt they could no longer ignore the harsh demands of this rarely achieved person. Although angry, the shy young girls were indifferent to it due to their deep attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

Agitated by the waves of *prema*, they took Kṛṣṇa’s order to heart and gradually moved toward the shore. The young girls covered their bodies with their long hair that hung to their feet. Surrounded by their curly dark locks, the lustrous lotus faces of the *gopis* looked like many small moons encircled by the essence of darkness. The beauty of their eyes eclipsed the beauty of blue lotus petals, their graceful movements conquered the gliding of elegant swans, and their faces defeated the splendor of golden lotus flowers.

Their tender feet had become completely numb from the cold. They felt very shy, but due to the bliss awakening within, their skin erupted with tiny

thrill-bumps, which appeared like particles of snow spread over their bodies by the winter winds. Inside themselves the *gopis* waged a war with the forces of shyness trying to hold them back, and the forces of desire pushing them forward. As they came up to waist level in the water, the *gopis* suddenly stood still by the scolding of the *sakhi* known as modesty. They joked with each other, “O *sakhi*! You go first!” “No, no, you go first!” “O thin-waisted young girl, why not go?” “O, no, no, you go first.” In that lonely place Kṛṣṇa greatly relished this splendid conversation.

The *gopis* could not move forward because the power of their moral character equaled that of their strong attraction to Kṛṣṇa. Though saturated with Kṛṣṇa *prema*, modesty subdued their ecstatic bliss. Glancing restlessly here and there from the corners of their eyes, the *gopis* came to the river’s bank with great difficulty.

Sri Kṛṣṇa, the supreme relisher of *rasa*, looked at the young girls with astonishment and cleverness. Being overpowered by shyness, they hid behind each other while trying to cover their private parts from His curious gaze. To those qualified *gopis* whose hearts burned with an intense desire to serve Him, Kṛṣṇa said, “O *sakhis*! Why are you afraid of Me? You are standing there in a confused state as if you are not the least bit attracted. How is it possible to cover yourselves? Sitting in the limbs of this tall tree, I can easily see you. On the pretext of morality you are trying to cheat Me. Now stand in a straight line, come before Me, and exhibit your splendid beauty. By following My instructions it will be very easy to get your clothes.”

The Vraja *kumaris* attentively listened to the pleasing words of Kṛṣṇa. Overcome with feelings of love, respect, and hesitation, each of the *gopis* slowly moved toward their beloved Lord. Kṛṣṇa relished the purity of their love while observing their state of embarrassment. Putting their clothes on His shoulder, Kṛṣṇa smiled as He drank the nectar from their sweet loving faces.

In an affectionate voice, Kṛṣṇa said, “It is very inauspicious to stand here with your hair hanging loose and disheveled. It is especially offensive for one performing a *vrata*. What to speak of a person observing a *vrata*, even an ordinary person keeps his hair tied. O beautiful young girls! Even the celestial nymphs lose their beauty if they let down their hair. By this act you

have spoiled your beauty. O girls whose sweet faces conquer the moon! You should tie your hair in a braid.”

Upon hearing Kṛṣṇa’s clever pleasing words, the *gopis* lost all apprehension. Overwhelmed with *prema*, they slowly rose out of the water. Their golden thighs radiated a special type of elegance. The ankle-bells on their pink lotus feet resounded like an army of quarreling ducks. As the young girls stood before Kṛṣṇa, they pleased Him with the fickle sound of their bangles.

Their hair stood on end as the *gopis* relished the moment with nervous laughter. The young *gopis* looked very beautiful with their slightly blooming golden breasts. Desiring to please the Lord, they tied up their hair in artistic ways. Though satisfied, Kṛṣṇa spoke as follows, “O girls, it is not right to stand before someone you respect. Even if you see Me as an ordinary person, it is not right for you to stand before Me. Therefore come here and obey Me by sitting on this pure seat.”

For the *gopis*, these words flowed like nectar from the moon of Kṛṣṇa’s mouth. They felt relieved, but due to fear they could not decide between right and wrong. The *gopis* crossed their legs and placed their hands over their private parts. With their breasts hanging down slightly as they leaned forward, the *gopis* looked like golden forests creepers laden with heavy jewel-like fruits.

The desire for conjugal love captured Kṛṣṇa’s mind. Smiling, He spoke pleasantly, “O young ladies! This is not the proper conduct of righteous people. A person doing a *vrata* should never bathe naked in a river. By doing so you have offended Yamuna-devi, the presiding deity of the river. And by playing in the water while looking at the bank you have also offended the *devatas*! Although you have obstructed My desires, your offense can be mitigated because you acted in ignorance. If you really want to achieve the results of your *vrata*, then you must atone for your offenses by following My advice.”

Seriously considering Kṛṣṇa’s proposal, the doe-eyed *gopis* thought, “We should do whatever the opposition suggests. But we cannot guess what He will say next. And if we do not comply, the results of our *vrata* will be destroyed. So what can we do?” While thinking thus, the *gopis* spoke

amongst themselves. One *gopi* said, “We are afraid and doubtful about following His advice.” Though filled with great joy and fervor, the grip of timidity made the *gopis* apprehensive.

Understanding their fatigue and mental condition, and seeing them losing their natural color, Kṛṣṇa said, “O young girls! Your glances fly hither and thither like the fearful eyes of the *cakora*. Why are you raising such harsh arguments? Please hear My words that can remove all the offenses made during your *vrata*. Can one quench his thirst without water? Without evening, summer gives no relief. Therefore, you should follow My order. You can wipe away all your sins just by offering your respects to Me. If you do it with great faith and devotion, you will receive the desired result in many ways. O beautiful young girls! To counteract your offenses you should stand before Me with straightened legs, and offer obeisances while placing your joined palms above your heads.”

Casting aside their shyness, the *gopis* obeyed the words of their dearest lover. With half-closed eyes they held their joined palms above their heads and offered respects to Kṛṣṇa, who made them act just like toy dolls. The *gopis* pacified Kṛṣṇa by standing humbly before Him with their heads hanging down. As Kṛṣṇa’s *prema*-filled heart melted, a nectarean smile perfumed His lips.

Glancing wantonly at the young girls, Kṛṣṇa revealed His desires by saying, “You have greatly pleased Me and I feel the utmost limit of love for you. Dress yourselves in your clothes, which are redder than pomegranate flowers. May you drown in the ocean of ecstasy according to your individual tastes of love.”

After saying this Kṛṣṇa extended His hand to give each *gopi* her respective clothes. The good fortune of the Vraja *kumaris* far surpassed that of the goddess of fortune. Holding their shimmering dresses in their hands, the *gopis* looked like clusters of golden lotuses bedecked with flags. They appeared very beautiful and ready for the play of love.

Then they carefully put on their clothes that were nicely scented from the touch of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus hands. Glancing shyly at Kṛṣṇa, their golden lotus faces bloomed with beauty. Their bodies trembled pleasurably from the excitement of finally achieving His association. Tasting the topmost

happiness, the *gopis* stood there steeped in affection. Even without touching Kṛṣṇa, they felt His powerful embrace.

Abandoning His gravity, the young prince of Vrndavana spoke compassionately to the young girls, “I knew everything before the desire tree of your determination sprouted. I have performed this astonishing pastime just to increase your love. By ordering you harshly, I tested the purity of your love. Attracted to Me, You submissively obeyed My beneficial orders, and therefore I have manifested eternal love within your hearts.

“Your desire is pure, eternally existing, and laden with *rasa*. I reciprocate differently with people in the mundane world. If a pure-hearted person displays such intense desires, I will transform them into *prema*. Then he will taste the blissful nectar derived from experiencing My qualities. This well of nectar exists independently of any other type of *rasas*. Even Laksmi-devi hankers for the love that you have so clearly displayed. Just as rice paddy that is boiled in water or fried in fire can never show the qualities of the seed, similarly, the lusty desires of the common people can never sprout in the ocean of such supreme *rasa*.”

After hearing Kṛṣṇa speak, the thoughtful girls appeared beautified with the sweet fragrance of the vine of fickleness. Accepting the words of their dearmost as truth, the *gopis* experienced both immeasurable joy and agitation due to their intense longing for Kṛṣṇa. Then the *gopis* cried tears of happiness that seemed like the fluid dripping from the ears of a lust-crazed elephant. Without responding to Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* just stood for some time with a disturbed look in their eyes. Now that their *vrata* was finished, the *gopis* felt surcharged with love and incredible bliss. They murmured among themselves with voices as sweet as cooing birds.

Kṛṣṇa continued, “Now return to Vrndavana. Soon we will enjoy together during a festive night. You have attained eternal perfection, so stop whispering like thirsty *cataki* birds.”

With their sidelong glances and lips trembling in love, the *gopis* appeared to be covering Kṛṣṇa with a shower of blue lotus petals and newly unfurled leaves. Pacified and pleased, the *gopis* then returned to Vrndavana with great difficulty.

Chapter Thirteen: Showing Favor to the Wives of the Sacrificial Brahmanas

While performing the pastime of stealing the *gopis'* clothes, Kṛṣṇa temporarily forgot about tending the cows. As He returned to His friends, Kṛṣṇa savored bliss within His heart produced by eating the deliciously sweet fruit borne on the creeper of conjugal love. Balarama, the wielder of the plow, and the cowherd boys enthusiastically welcomed Kṛṣṇa with feelings of joy. They entered the forest to continue their merry making and tending the cows.

Kṛṣṇa glorified Balarama and His intimate friends, “Hey cultured friends! O Stoka-Kṛṣṇa! I am so happy to see you. O Amsuman! Even while fighting your body looks beautiful and effulgent. O Sridama! You are adorned with the opulent garland of all good fortune. Hey Subala! Your strength is the wealth of your intense love. O Arjuna! Your white color is due to the pure fame of your deep love. O Visala! The greatness of Your love is always joyfully displayed. O Ojasvi! You are elegant due your brilliant strength. O Devaprastha! Your form is the crest jewel on the mountain peak of fraternal affection. O Varuthapa! Because you have controlled the chariot of your mind, your commands are always obeyed.

“Look My friends! Just see the splendorous beauty of the forest grove. The trees look very attractive with their coral-reddish buds enveloped by tender reddish-green leaves. They look just like pairs of embracing lovers. The densely foliated branches of the trees completely cover the sky in all directions. Although many varieties of birds sit on the small branches, they are not bound there. They are independent and beyond the control of Cupid. What to speak of the radiant beauty of Vrndavana’s trees, which is beyond the comprehension of the mind and words. Even if one takes birth in the effulgent and worshipable land of Vrndavana as an insignificant plant, he should still be accepted as a saint.

“Hunters attain the supreme happiness by using their bows and arrows to spoil the enjoyment of their enemies. Saints find delight within their purified minds and softened hearts. *Karmis* reap the fruits of their piety to taste the joy of heaven. *Ksatriyas* take pleasure in killing tigers and taking

their skins as spoils. But just from the bark, leaves, or fruit of a tree in Vrndavana one can derive inconceivable happiness. Taking birth as a tree in Vrndavana, therefore, is itself a perfection fulfilling all the needs of the soul.”

By speaking such matchless, enchanting words, Kṛṣṇa fulfilled the desires of His friends. Continuing His delightful childhood pastimes, Kṛṣṇa meandered along behind the cows. Since the cows had eaten a lot of grass, they felt thirsty and walked slowly. Out of affection, Kṛṣṇa brought them to the Yamuna to drink some water. The tall trees on either side of the sandy path provided soothing shade. Accompanied by Balarama, His *gopa* friends and cows, Kṛṣṇa happily approached the River Yamuna. If Kṛṣṇa and His friends had not appeared on earth, no one would have understood their sweet moods of love.

While the cows sipped the crystal clear water, Kṛṣṇa rested on the root of a tree beside the path. Shining radiantly, Kṛṣṇa made a plan within His mind to test the loving affection of the chaste wives of the *yajnic brahmanas*. Playing and roaming through the forest all day with the cows made the boys feel tired and hungry. The drops of perspiration on their weary faces looked like dew drops on wilted lotus flowers. Due to hunger, they looked weak and lusterless. In this distressed condition, the cowherd boys fearlessly appealed to Kṛṣṇa and Balarama, who were busy relishing the sweet smell of musk that pervaded the air.

The boys said, “You are the supreme personalities. O Balarama! You are very strong, handsome and radiant. O Kṛṣṇa! Your color resembles a fresh monsoon cloud and You have powerful arms. We are being harassed by hunger and You should do something about it. We feel like the virulent venom of a snake is burning us. Our raging appetites have turned our bellies into pots of burning fire. We cannot find any relief. O beloved friends! You two brothers must think how to take away our agony.”

His heart softened with love, Kṛṣṇa smiled slightly to reveal His beautiful teeth that are as white as *kunda* flowers. Then He advised His friends, “O *sakhas*, listen! I will help you by telling you how to get relief from your misery. Not far from here are some very powerful and blissful *brahmanas* who are respected by the best of sages. They are performing the Angirasa sacrifice to gain promotion to heaven. They have attained brilliant fame

because of their broad minds and liberal distribution of food. Besides their expertise in Vedic rituals, these *grhasta brahmanas* can easily dispel anyone's ignorance with their vast knowledge. Now quickly go offer obeisances to them, address them respectfully, and lovingly beg some foodstuffs in our names.”

Being ordered by Kṛṣṇa, the pious, softhearted cowherd boys expertly and joyfully made their way to the *yajna sala* (sacrificial arena). Even though they were tired, the boys eagerly went to beg from the *brahmanas*. Upon entering the *yajna sala*, they enjoyed seeing the sacrificial fire and the dense clouds of smoke. The smell of burning *ghee* gratified their noses, and the warm air soothed their sense of touch. Hearing the *brahmanas*' melodious singing of the *Sama Veda* delighted their ears. The thought that they would soon receive some tasty foodstuffs to offer to Kṛṣṇa made their tongues salivate in anticipation. Thus the cowherd boys gratified their senses at the gorgeously decorated *yajna sala*.

As Ramacandra, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty, is called the “Treta-yuga *avataram*” because He appeared in Treta-yuga, similarly, this *yajna sala* is also *treta-yuga avataram* because it has three types of fires (*ahavanya*, *daksina-agni*, and *gharapatya*). As the city of Ayodhya is *visarayuparam*, or beside the flowing waters of the famous River Sarayu, similarly, this sacrificial fire is *visarayuparam*, always receiving a constant supply of wood. As King Bhagiratha is *samunnita pragvamshan*, the deliverer of His ancestors, similarly, this *yajna* is *samunnita pragvamshan* or situated on the eastern side of the house. Its presence beautifies the homes of the *brahmanas*' patrons.

A *brahmana* boy who has not completed his *brahmacari* life is *samekhala kundalamsam*, or handsome with his waist-belt and ropes made from *munja* grass draped over his shoulder. Similarly, this *yajnic sala* is *samekhala kundalamsam*, embellished with different raised seats placed around the fire pits. As the heart of one relishing *rasas* becomes *sampurnam pravista*, full by entering the ocean of *bhakti-rasa*, similarly, the *yajna sala* is *pravista rasa sampurnam*, complete by its abundance of *kusa* grass.

As a house has a kitchen full of cooking pots (*prajyathalikam*) to serve its guests, similarly, this *yajna sala* is full of pots (*prajyathalikam*) of pure *ghee* and water. As a separated lover's eyes always glisten with tears,

similarly, this *yajna sala* always shines with flames. During the rainy season rivulets swell with water, *vishal purna patram*, and make the middle of the river very deep. Similarly, in the middle the *yajna sala* there are *vishal purna patram*, deep pots full of foodstuffs.

Clubs (*musalam* or *ulukhala*) are used to chastise a gentle saintly person in the royal assembly of an evil king. Similarly, this *yajna sala* has a mortar and pestle (*musalam* and *ulukhala*) for grinding the spices and ingredients used in the sacrifice. *Ksatriyas* are expert in using their hands for fighting (*samit kushalam*). Similarly, this *yajna sala* also has *kusa* grass and wood called *samit kushalam*.

As Mahesa is *sahom*, always associated with his consort Uma, similarly, this *yajna sala* is *sahom*, always full of many oblations. Inside the *yajna sala* the cowherd boys saw many *yajnic brahmanas* chanting hymns from the *Sama Veda*. Similarly, of the four ways to control somebody one is called *sama* (appeasement or making friends). As one enjoys embracing his lover to his chest, similarly, hearing the precise enunciation of the hymns pleased everyone's heart.

Just as sages have beautiful locks of matted hair (*sujatakam*), similarly, the hymns chanted by the *brahmanas* contained many sweet tunes (*sujatakam*). The breasts of young ladies appear firm and beautiful (*susamhitam*). Similarly, the *brahmanas'* singing sounded like a tightly composed display (*susamhitam*) of beautiful poetry.

What kind of *yajnic brahmanas* were they? As a worshiper is well versed in acting according to the proper time (*samay samayajnaih*), similarly, these *brahmanas* performed the *yajnas* exactly at the auspicious time (*samay samayajnaih*) of morning and evening. *Ksatriyas* attain the wealth of victory in battle by repeatedly using their bows. Similarly, the *brahmanas* have become wealthy by constantly doing *yajnas*.

After examining the *yajna sala* the cowherd boys walked slowly forward. Although they smelled the sweet aroma of the sacrificial fire, their stomachs remained empty and dissatisfied. Their bangles and ankle-bells jingled sweetly as they bowed respectfully on the ground before the *brahmanas*. Even the king of heaven esteemed these austere and renowned *brahmanas*, who always received the seat of honor at any festival. As

personifications of Vedic knowledge, they exhibited extreme gravity, yet they had deep personal feelings.

In deep rumbling voices the cowherd boys addressed the *brahmanas*, “O worshipable and cultured ones! Please listen to us. We are friends of Balarama and Damodara coming here as your guests. Balarama, the embodiment of all wonderful transcendental qualities, is just nearby talking with His younger brother. They sent us to you because you are well-wishers of everyone. You may ask why Kṛṣṇa did not come with us. The answer is that Kṛṣṇa is fixed in His position just like the immovable Mount Sumeru.

“As oceans of compassion, you *brahmanas* benefit all living entities. You always perform pious activities like digging wells, establishing parks and gardens, and making attractive walkways. Being dear to everyone, you satisfy all living entities by giving them the thing they cherish, namely food. You have become effulgent due to your fame.

“You are charitable and fixed in *Brahman*. Since we left home early this morning we have not eaten anything or taken any rest. We are very tired and hungry from roaming all over with the cows. Balarama and Damodara also feel distressed. Although They tolerated it for a short time, now They are anxious to eat something. Therefore, They sent us to you to beg some food because you are the maintainers of *grhastha dharma*. So please make arrangements to affectionately provide us with plenty of food.”

Although hearing the boys, those sober *brahmanas* remained silent just like deaf men. Understanding that the *brahmanas* felt no obligation to give them charity, the boys became morose. They thought that the *brahmanas* were treating them like hard-hearted, invalid old men. Though wise and learned in *yajnas*, why did the *brahmanas* ignore the humble request of the cowherd boys? Perhaps, it was not their habit to entertain the requests of young children. Maybe they disregarded the boys’ due to their attachment to sacrificing animals, or due to enmity, foolishness, or insufficient piety, or because they had not received any mercy from the Lord.

The boys’ faces turned pale from disappointment. Lamenting over their failure, they unhappily returned to Kṛṣṇa. Upon noticing their condition, Kṛṣṇa remained equipoised and displayed a mild smile on His peaceful

lotus face. The faces of the boys, however, conveyed frustration in their begging attempt.

At that time, Kṛṣṇa thought, “Those *yajnic brahmanas* are not actually charitable towards others. They simply make a big show with their elaborate fire sacrifices. It seems that their charity does not extend beyond the limits of their own bellies.”

Although mentally disturbed, the cowherd boys tried to explain the situation to Balarama. They said, “O Rama! We have never seen such harshness as we saw today in the eyes of those *brahmanas*. They are *yajnic brahmanas* in name only. Actually they are first-class fools because they do not know the real purport of the *Vedas*.

“Mentioning Your names we begged foodstuffs which are pleasing to the soul. What to speak of giving charity, they did not even answer us, which is the minimum response enjoined in the *Vedas*. But in their homes we saw and heard them saying so many things such as...‘Cook this, fry that, let us drink, eat, come, go outside, take this away...’ We saw those *brahmanas*, the crest-jewels among the *jnanis*, busily engaged inside their houses eating palatable foods.

“Outside their houses many thousands of people milled about. Being angry, we did not bother to go there. Seeing the quality of generosity being so dishonored in the hands of the *brahmanas*, we did not want to stay there for a moment. By going to them we received nothing more than utter humiliation, whereas they enhanced their family prestige by performing a huge *yajna*.

“O Kṛṣṇa, our dear friend! We brought back nothing but the smoke that we momentarily inhaled at the fire sacrifice. Like the Vedic injunctions, all of Your instructions are held as crest-jewels on our heads. Just as nectar never turns salty, how is it that Your infallible words put us into such embarrassment?”

Kṛṣṇa smiled mildly and spoke some sweet pleasing words mixed with cleverness, “O you boys! Why are you affected by false anger? You should not have such a defiant antagonistic mood like a newly married woman. It is natural that your minds are disturbed because selfish people like those *brahmanas* always cause suffering to others. Finding the faults in others is

the habit of common people, but you should not see like this. Being preoccupied with the *yajna*, the *brahmanas* obviously could not attend to you. Listen carefully! You should follow My perfect advice and achieve the desired result.

“The wives of the *brahmanas* are also present in the *yajna sala*. But they are embodiments of kindness, compassion, and purity. They possess the wealth of having completely surrendered their minds to Me. Although they are women, they do not take pride in turning beggars away from their doors. These women do not see anything unfavorable for My service. They immediately feel ecstatic upon hearing My name and viewing My transcendental form. They will happily give you plenty of food to remove your hunger. Besides being adorned in golden ornaments, the wives of the *brahmanas* regularly receive and willingly distribute gold in charity. Although they are *brahmanas*’ wives, instead of sitting on the ground like ordinary women, they sit on golden thrones like queens with their bodies radiating a splendid luster.

“Feeling gladness within your hearts, go to their private quarters. In My name ask for abundant foodstuffs which will bring you all satisfaction. The wives of the *brahmanas*, who are just like desire trees, will definitely gratify your cherished desires. O My friends! Taking My words as a Vedic injunction, which is dear to you and to them, go there again and beg for food.”

Being inspired by Kṛṣṇa’s powerful presentation, the *gopas* left the garden full of fresh creepers. Riding the waves of pleasure, they quickly returned to the *yajna sala*. In a submissive mood, they approached the private chambers of the wives of the hard-hearted *brahmanas*.

Just as lightning spreads throughout the sky and earth, similarly, the boys saw the *brahmanas*’ wives fully ornamented with the effulgent wealth of prestige. As the lightning and rain in *sravana* month become separated from the clouds, similarly, the *brahmanas*’ wives had given up sense enjoyment due to separation from Kṛṣṇa. Although lightning flashes out of a cloud in a harsh way, the *brahmanas*’ wives appeared softhearted. Lightning flashes brilliantly for a moment, and is then detached from the body of the cloud. But the bodies of the *brahmanas*’ wives always emitted an attractive radiance.

As lotuses grow in the water on straight stems, similarly, the wives of the *brahmanas* spoke in a straightforward way. The wives of the *brahmanas* resembled golden creepers of flowing beauty moving here and there. But in separation from Kṛṣṇa they could not find any pleasure. Even without the night, they exhibited effulgences rivaling the glowing full moon. In the absence of Kṛṣṇa, however, they always felt unhappy.

The *yajna patnis* (wives of the *brahmanas*) existed like the personified flames of a fire. Their saintly qualities derided the fame of Arundhati (the chaste wife of Brahmarṣi Vasiṣṭhadeva). Somehow they maintained a joyful state by the strength of their affection for Kṛṣṇa, which acted like a celestial herbal medicine to sustain them, and burned like the steady flame of an oil lamp. During any ceremony these beautiful *brahmana* ladies always behaved perfectly according to time and place. They displayed the limit of worldly conduct by welcoming their guests with sweet words and serving them first-class food. Due to their love for the Lord they knew how to act properly in all circumstances.

As vines of parental affection, they could not ignore the pleas of hungry children. Tolerating the shouts of their angry husbands, they appeared as the embodiments of forgiveness on the earth. Each one of them exhibited many attractive qualities such as purity of purpose and absolute dedication to the Lord. Their wealth surpassed even that of the heavenly king Indra who protects others with his thunderbolt.

Upon seeing the *yajna patnis*, the boys immediately said, “O magnanimous wives of the greatest *brahmanas*! We offer our obeisances to your pinkish lotus feet that are the source of generosity and happiness. We are close friends of Kṛṣṇa, the personification of all knowledge. Please listen to our humble appeal.”

That one utterance of Kṛṣṇa’s name resonated within the ears of the *brahmanas*’ wives millions of times over. Startled and astounded, they forgot everything and exclaimed, “What kind of enchanting *mantra* is this?” Just as a she deer becomes helplessly attracted by the sweet flute melodies of a hunter, similarly, the *yajna patnis* swooned in ecstasy upon hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s name.

The pure-hearted wives of the *brahmanas*, who appeared on the earth like the predominating deities of the *Upanisads*, stopped cooking and looked respectfully at the cowherd boys while fixing their minds in meditation. Inspired by Kṛṣṇa's reassuring words, the boys smiled pleasantly and completed their request to the ladies.

“O wives of the *brahmanas*! We are very hungry! We did not take any breakfast and have been playing all day. The prince of Vṛndavana, who is the reigning Cupid of this world and the object of your worship, sent us to beg food. Kṛṣṇa is waiting nearby with His elder brother Balarama, who always showers Kṛṣṇa with joy and shines with the power of King Indra.

“Our dear friend Kṛṣṇa is known throughout the world. Surely, you must have heard about Him from the lips of the great devotees. Even as a baby He made the cruel witch Putana famous by giving her the post of His nurse. As a small boy He pushed the terrible Trnavarta demon into the earth, and turned Bakasura into an ugly corpse. He vanquished the venomous serpent Aghasura and banished Kaliya from the Yamuna. What more can we say about His fantastic exploits? The glories of all the demons and devotees in the entire material manifestation cannot compare with a drop in the ocean of Kṛṣṇa's unlimited nectarean glories.”

Upon hearing these words, the hearts of the ladies immediately melted in ecstatic love. They felt that the great treasure of Kṛṣṇa's form, which is a constant flow of beautiful nectar appearing as inconceivable eternal existence, had suddenly manifested before them. The thought of directly meeting Kṛṣṇa stole the chariots of their minds. Somehow or other the eternal perfection that they desired for so long was now appearing before them.

Drowning in an ocean of bliss, their eyes flooded with tears and their tender creeper-like bodies erupted in blissful bumps. Their senses went numb and stopped working. The transformation infused them with new life. This newly acquired good fortune enhanced their beauty. Their bodies displayed a splendid elegance as the intensity of their desire to meet their beloved increased more and more. Nourished by such hankering, the eyes of the *yajna patnis* filled with the form of Kṛṣṇa.

Seeing their increasingly ecstatic condition, the cowherd boys felt perplexed. While looking at each other with astonishment they said, “Upon hearing our appeal these respectable ladies went mad with the desire to see Kṛṣṇa. Their actions are very strange. They are not moving, speaking, or looking at anything. Alas! Has some evil planet mesmerized them?

“It is not surprising that the *brahmanas* treated us rudely and totally ignored us. They did not even acknowledge our arrival or give us anything. But we are amazed that their lotus-eyed wives failed to give us anything, even after attentively hearing our request and showing us so much loving affection and intention to serve.

“Who can understand the mentality of the *yajna patnis*? How did their behavior change so radically? Something created a sweet mellow within their minds and made them ecstatic. That transformation could neither remove the cause nor remove the effect.”

While the humble cowherd boys talked in this way, the wives of the *brahmanas*, although failing to respond verbally, went directly into their huge kitchens, which were thoroughly stocked by their maidservants. On a large plate they expertly piled up rice, vegetables, and other delicious food which represented their loving desire to please Kṛṣṇa. The delectable items included creamy cakes, sweet breads, *chapatis*, yogurt, and a complete array of delicacies to lick, chew, drink, and suck.

They lovingly prepared foods of all the six tastes. Just as the caves (*kandar*) and gentle wind blowing on Govardhana Hill serve the Lord, similarly, they collected many kinds of root vegetables (*kanda*) to please the Lord. Before offering them, they artistically arranged all the fragrant, juicy, delicious, and colorful preparations. Just as a woman beautifies herself by wearing golden ornaments, similarly, the varieties of attractive vegetables like *sak* and *sukta* embellished the offering.

As the minds of the *yajna patnis* enriched with spontaneous bliss, similarly, the opulence of the offering increased by adding first class *dals* and soups. As a divine weapon released in a battle is invincible, similarly, the different varieties of cooked spinach acquired undefeatable tastes and qualities. The ladies scented the offering with their pure desire to prepare everything with

love and devotion. Just as the Ganges looks beautiful flowing past Kasi, similarly, the wonderful varieties of food looked very attractive.

According to their hearts' desires, the *yajna patnis* put these foods in golden pots with crystal lids. The pots glittered attractively from the different objects reflected on their crystal lids. The ladies covered the pots with fine white cloth. Ignoring the many people milling about the sacrificial arena, they held the pots on their upraised lotus palms and walked out. Those best of ladies appeared like many-branched desire trees moving on the earth to satisfy the needy. While walking along they communicated with each other through eye movements, and occasionally turned their lotus faces towards Kṛṣṇa's friends. The submissive cowherd boys ran ahead showing the way to Kṛṣṇa. Feeling ecstatic, the cowherd boys spoke in soft joyful voices to indicate the proper direction.

The ladies looked like beautiful lotus flowers wandering over the earth. By carrying pots of food in their lotus palms they became as fortunate as the *gopis* who always associate with Kṛṣṇa. Refulgent as golden lotuses, the *yajna patnis* held the pots and walked with the grandeur of a band of she-elephants. The weight of their excessive love for Kṛṣṇa appeared like a heavy jeweled necklace in their hearts. Anxiety filled their minds. Due to the heavy weight of their pots, full breasts and hips, the ladies proceeded slowly and steadily toward the Lord of their hearts. Though walking was painful, because they were surrendered souls they felt no inconvenience while going to Kṛṣṇa.

Due to conflicting moods of transcendental ecstasy, they sometimes ran toward their beloved or stumbled and progressed very slowly. The soft jingling of their waist-bells and the “*runu jhunu! runu jhunu!*” sound of their ankle-bells vibrated sweetly as they moved. After going a short distance they saw the plants and creepers of Vraja bending down in a humble, blissful way. From this they assumed that Kṛṣṇa, the ocean of all transcendental qualities, must be near by. They went mad due to their intense love for the Lord.

Suddenly they saw an effulgence more beautiful than a dense rain cloud, a mound of *kajala*, and a bouquet of blue lotus flowers combined. Aho! Upon meeting their faces, Kṛṣṇa's effulgence turned into *kajala* to surround their eyes and reflect on their hair parts. Touching their necks, His effulgence

embraced them as a garland of blue lotus flowers. Kṛṣṇa's effulgence turned into *tamala* flowers to wrap around their ears. When Kṛṣṇa's effulgence touched their breasts, it rested there as a necklace of blue sapphires. Illuminating their bodies, Kṛṣṇa covered them with the blue dress of His effulgence.

With unblinking eyes the wives of the *brahmanas* beheld their beloved Syama before them. Resting His left arm on Subala's shoulder, Kṛṣṇa looked like a wave in an unlimited ocean of beauty. He playfully twirled a lotus flower in His right hand, while simultaneously spinning the minds of the ladies with loving agitation. He wore a peacock feather on His turban, golden yellow cloth around His body, and a garland of forest flowers and leaves hung from His neck. Sandalwood paste and colored minerals adorned His transcendental body.

Kṛṣṇa released a shower of nectar with His attractive bright smile that was more splendorous than the moonshine. Like someone greeting a desirable guest, the ladies opened the doors of their eyes in ecstasy and welcomed Syamasundara into their hearts. Although Kṛṣṇa appeared like a prankish paramour lover, His frivolous behavior charmed their hearts.

The ladies considered, "Is He a dramatic dancer about to enact a wonderful pastime? Is He Cupid personified, or is He the embodiment of conjugal love? Is He the personified bliss of love? Is He the very form of pleasurable pastimes?" All these questions raced through the excited minds of the *yajna patnis*.

Due to absorption in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, they acted boldly, free from doubts and hesitation. Conquered by love, they lost control of their minds while tasting the mellow of their relationship with the Lord. Having taken complete control of their senses, Kṛṣṇa entered their hearts, came outside, and again reentered their hearts.

During this experience the *yajna patnis* thought, "How amazing! Our beloved Syamasundara is standing before us and simultaneously standing in our hearts!" In such a bewildered state the ladies saw Kṛṣṇa inside their hearts when they closed their eyes, and upon opening their eyes, they saw their beloved before them. Although satisfied to see Kṛṣṇa within their hearts, they moved closer to Him upon opening their eyes.

The wives looked very beautiful holding the offerings of food in their attractive, lotus bud-like hands. Just as a desire tree fulfills the heart's desires, similarly, Kṛṣṇa felt satisfied seeing the beautiful bodies of the ladies which appeared like glittering vines growing in a celestial pleasure garden.

Kṛṣṇa joyfully addressed those doe-eyed ladies, “Aho My dear ones! Did you suffer any inconvenience in coming here? O fortunate ladies! Please sit down and make yourselves comfortable. I can see you have great love for Me because you have personally brought Me foodstuffs. There is no way I can repay you for your wonderful service. May you find complete satisfaction in your love for Me and thus relieve Me of My debt to you.”

Kṛṣṇa's sweet, deep voice sounded like rumbling clouds. He soothed the ears of the *yajna patnis* with His love-soaked, distinctly pronounced words, which were sweeter than the drops of nectar falling from the autumn moon. The wives of the *brahmanas* thought they had attained the pinnacle of fortune just by hearing Him.

Taking Kṛṣṇa through the aperture of their lotus eyes, they embraced Him within their hearts. Melting in rapturous joy, they relinquished all fears and anxieties. With their creeper-like hands those fortunate ladies offered the fragrant flowers of their affection to worship their beloved. Kṛṣṇa enchanted the minds of the *brahmanas'* wives by saturating them with spiritual bliss. And He completely removed the painful fire of separation.

Kṛṣṇa continued speaking, “You should return to your husbands and finish the sacrifice. I am pleased by persons who worship Me in My form as the enjoyer of sacrifices.”

Although Kṛṣṇa's splendid face glowed like the full moon, instead of pouring out heavenly nectar, He delivered bitter poison in the form of unpalatable words. The frustration of the *brahmanas'* wives long-awaited desires drained all the color from their bodies. Their minds had become fully attached to Kṛṣṇa by repeatedly hearing about Him from the lips of the Vrajavasis. Upon their arrival and initial meeting with Kṛṣṇa, He encouraged their blossoming desires by saying, “Come and sit down.” Then a few minutes later He destroyed the flourishing creeper of their desires and made them miserable.

Their faces turned pale and cheerless. Due to being completely ignored, an unbearable pain supplanted the joy they previously felt. Their hearts severely hurt, tears gushed out of their closed eyes. Just as a demigoddess does not cast a shadow, similarly, these grief-stricken ladies no longer flashed their brilliant effulgences. Just as the light in an oil lamp diminishes with the exhaustion of fuel, similarly, the natural glow of the *brahmana* ladies eventually decreased to nil. Giving up their shyness, the wives appealed to Kṛṣṇa with choked voices.

“O almighty one, You are the dearest one to all living entities. Please do not speak such cruel words that pierce the core of our hearts like a thunderbolt. Please listen attentively, and do not deprive us the pleasure of seeing You. For if You do, we will surely die.

“How could such a thing happen? Alas! Does a river rushing out of a mountain peak turn back and take shelter inside the mountain? Of course not, rather, it flows naturally to the ocean, which remains neutral and unaffected. You are everything for those who have nothing in this world. O Murari! We have no one else in this world but You. Therefore, we can no longer find any pleasure in returning home. In dense darkness one may make a mistake and go in the wrong direction. But by the power of his piety he may come to the right path. Similarly, if without any endeavor a blind man attains divine vision, he will not reject that fortune.

“Alas! No doubt You are learned in ethics and morality. But these words of Yours are devoid of love and affection. Until now we have maintained our lives solely by hearing Your name and fame. You emanate the beauty, splendor, and sweetness of a thousand Cupids, but where is Your sweetness now? O Damodara! Although You are proud, please listen to us for a few moments. You have promised to never reject anyone who serves You and once says, ‘O Lord! From today on I am Yours.’ Now please keep Your promise. We have given up the dark cave of household life, which is nothing but a bitter path full of the thorns of hard work. Now please accept us as Your maidservants.

“Our husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, relatives, and friends will no longer take us back. They will reject us and laugh at us. Even the sinful people will criticize us. But despite all of this, we offer our bodies in the service of Your lotus feet. Therefore, O Lord! We humbly beg You to please show us

Your compassion! Please take control of the chariots of our minds and quickly grant our cherished desire. O compassionate one! We are fully surrendered souls, so please accept us. Intoxicate us with the shower of Your nectarean association. On our heads and breasts we respectfully hold the fragrant flowers which You neglectfully kick away with Your lotus feet.”

Until now the *yajna patnis* had carefully concealed their love for Kṛṣṇa within their hearts. Now their bodies, covered with bumps of ecstatic delight, clearly revealed their intense attachment to the Lord. The face of Damodara gleamed attractively like the soothing rays of the full moon, His leaf-like lips bathed in a sweet smile, and His white teeth shone with a slightly reddish hue resembling pomegranate seeds.

After hearing the pleasing prayers of the *yajna patnis*, Kṛṣṇa said, “Listen attentively as I fill your ears with the truth. Such stubborn behavior does not befit you. You should understand that a self-controlled person who surrenders to the scriptures and hears about Me, chants My name and glories, and meditates on My form can very easily bring Me under his control. Such perfection is not achieved by physical proximity to Me. O upholders of truth! Please, therefore, return to your homes and meditate on Me. By this practice you will get free from material bondage and attain Me, the friend and Lord of all creation.

“Actually in this birth as the wives of *brahmanas* it will not be beneficial for you to physically associate with Me, a member of the *vaisya* community. It will be better for you to think of Me within Your minds. I will also think of you and firmly embrace you there. Please go home and do not be in anxiety about your relatives. Do not worry! Your husbands will not be inimical toward you. Indeed, your husbands, children, and relatives are dear to you because I am residing within them in My expanded form as the Paramatma. Only one who has been rejected by Me will be envious of a person who has offered his heart to Me, the form of the Absolute Truth.”

The ladies drank the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s words with the cups of their ears. In this way, Kṛṣṇa showed His expertise in presenting arguments from different points of view. The *yajna patnis* appreciated His reasonable words and felt great joy within their hearts. Seeing this as Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, they fixed their minds on Him and eagerly took His handsome form into their

hearts. Driven by Cupid, they disregarded Kṛṣṇa's contradictory behavior and relished the splendid beauty of His wonderful transcendental form. Though perspiring and shedding tears of joy, the doe-eyed ladies somehow managed to return home.

One of the wives of the *brahmanas*, though forcefully kept home by her angry husband, entered a state of ecstasy upon hearing descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's beauty from the cowherd boys. Not caring for the poisonous words of her crazy husband, she absorbed herself in a loving meditation on Kṛṣṇa. Then she lost external consciousness and saw Kṛṣṇa manifest before her saying, "Give up everything and come live with Me in Vṛndavana." After receiving this order she prepared herself to meet Kṛṣṇa.

Just as one planning to visit a foreign country waits for an auspicious time, similarly, she took this as the ideal time to satisfy her desire to enjoy with Kṛṣṇa in the groves of Vṛndavana. On account of her complete attachment to Kṛṣṇa and because of having seen Him once in meditation, she adopted the principle of rejecting a lower thing for a higher thing. Therefore, she abandoned her mood of identifying as the wife of a *brahmana*. It is not very surprising then that she gave up her material body.

Within a moment she obtained a spiritual body and enjoyed blissful pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. Attaining the direct association of Kṛṣṇa naturally fills one with inconceivable delight. Her intense love for the Lord forced her to reject the control of her husband and submit herself to Kṛṣṇa. No obstacle could diminish her ever-increasing love for Kṛṣṇa. Although one may use his fingernails to break off a small piece from a tender creeper, that piece will continue to live and later sprout again. Similarly, it appeared that the *brahmana's* wife perished with the demise of her material body, but actually she continued to exist in her spiritual body.

She continued living at home in a spiritual body just suitable for pleasing the Lord. After sometime she got the association of Kṛṣṇa's intimate Vraja *gopis* who taught her exactly how to act to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. Thus she qualified to obtain His blissful association in the coming days. By repeatedly studying Kṛṣṇa's transcendental qualities she overcame all impediments. As the ocean waves continually break on the beach, the desire to see Kṛṣṇa constantly moved in her heart. By the strength of her *bhajana* she cut her bondage to *maya* and developed intense yearning to attain Kṛṣṇa. At this

stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, She considered her husband and family to be no more important than straw in the street. A moment later she left her body.

This amazing act eclipsed the fame of even the greatest *yogi* who by deep concentration leaves his body at his own will. Taking note of her pure devotion for Kṛṣṇa, the *yajnic brahmanas*, who were *acaryas* of Vedic wisdom, felt sorrowful and condemned themselves. They said, “Alas! To hell with our lives since we have no love for Kṛṣṇa; to hell with our expertise in the rituals of sacrifice, our charitable acts, and our extensive learning; to hell with our abilities, intelligence, self-realization, and aristocratic background; to hell with our *asanas*, meditation and concentration; and to hell with our knowledge of *tantra* and *mantra*.

“Aho! Although our wives have never done *japa*, studied the *Vedas*, undergone the purificatory rites, followed the formalities of cleanliness or engaged in pious rituals, just see the pure love they have for Kṛṣṇa. They never studied nor meditated on the nature of the self. They merely heard the transcendental glories of Lord Hari from the lips of pure devotees. But just see the intensity of their love for Kṛṣṇa that inspired them to act so wonderfully.

“We have never seen all these incredible feelings before. Giving up all shame, our wives ignored their kinsmen and acted frivolously. Overwhelmed by the order of Kṛṣṇa, they considered the requests of their husbands and relatives no more than straw.”

Commenting on the lady who left her body in anxiety to meet Kṛṣṇa, the *brahmanas* said, “What can we say about this? Only after many lifetimes of severe austerities can a perfect *yogi* leave his body at will by controlling his life airs and raising the *atma* through the six *cakras*. Yet in order to see her beloved Lord, this lady surmounted all obstacles and attained a position rarely achieved by the greatest *yogis*! Who can understand the nature of Kṛṣṇa *prema*?

“What can we say about our cruel treatment of our wives? Although we have heard so many things, we paid no attention to their devotion to Kṛṣṇa, or to their requests for articles to offer Him. Even though we are supposed

to be intelligent, it seems the same Lord covered us with illusion in order to shower mercy upon our wives.”

Though ornamented with Vedic knowledge, the *brahmanas* lamented deeply and fell speechless. Renouncing their pride they sat down on the ground. When their wives returned the *brahmanas* could understand that Kṛṣṇa’s association had transformed them. Their wives displayed all auspicious qualities now that their hearts were saturated with divine love. The ladies were filled up to the necks with the unlimited beauty of Kṛṣṇa and they cried tears of joy. Enchanted by Kṛṣṇa’s delightful character, their hearts surged with continuous bliss. They existed in a transcendental realm far beyond any amount of piety and knowledge.

Seeing that their wives had become liberated souls, those effulgent, broad-minded *brahmanas* smiled happily. They showed more respect to their wives than ever before. Now the *brahmanas* honored their wives more than they did the *sastras*, *gurus*, and other exalted *brahmanas*. It is not surprising that they stood up and greeted their wives with great affection. Indeed, anyone who sees someone who is deeply in love with Kṛṣṇa will also develop affection for Kṛṣṇa.

The *yajna patnis* who had seen Kṛṣṇa praised their friend who gave up her body because she could not go out. One lady said, “No one in the world surpasses her fortune. Not only in this birth, but in all her previous auspicious births she must have enjoyed intimate pastimes with Kṛṣṇa.” After saying this, the wives of the *brahmanas* showed indifference toward their husbands.

It is Kṛṣṇa’s nature to reciprocate with His devotees according to their moods of love. Kṛṣṇa, who is expert and softhearted, fulfilled the desire of the lady who gave up her body by submerging her in an unlimited river of love. He gave her the association of His dearest *gopis* who always enjoy ecstatic pastimes with Him. The *gopis* embraced her, asked about her welfare, and taught her the art of pleasing Kṛṣṇa. Radiant with pure love, she quickly attained the qualification to associate intimately with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was very happy to see this.

Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa, Balarama, and Their cowherd boyfriends sat down to relish the feast offered by the *brahmanas*’ wives. Kṛṣṇa always enjoys

eating food that is nicely prepared and artistically displayed. The delicious foodstuffs were prepared purely by the *yajna patnis*, and flavored with the nectar of their deep love for Kṛṣṇa.

After finishing His meal Kṛṣṇa joked with His friends and drove the cows home. Kṛṣṇa played His charming *murali* in order to extinguish the fire of separation within the hearts of the Vraja *gopis* who were waiting all day for His return. Hearing that melodious flute, the trees, plants, creepers, and all the directions became enlivened and beautiful. Tasting the sweet nectar of Kṛṣṇa's enchanting *murali* entrapped the birds, she-deer, and animals. Keeping His brother Balarama in front, Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of blissful *prema*, walked into Vrndavana surrounded by His friends.

The lotus face of Kṛṣṇa looked extremely beautiful framed by His dark blue locks of hair, and covered by a thick layer of dust from the feet of the cows. The slightly tilted turban on His head looked gorgeous with its artistic ornament of hanging red *asoka* flowers. The restless movements of Kṛṣṇa's splendid *makara* earrings and the blue lotus flower resting on His ear further increased His elegance. The pollen falling from that flower mixed with the drops of Kṛṣṇa's perspiration to enhance the gentle radiance of His cheeks. As Kṛṣṇa moved slowly along the path, His beautiful ankle-bells jingled sweet melodies. The sweet, drawn-out tunes of His *murali* filled the ears and minds of everyone with delight.

As the evening approached, the *gopis* spoke incessantly about Kṛṣṇa. Upon hearing the bellowing of the returning cows, the talks of the *gopis* reached a climax of excitement. Seeing their excessive craving to meet Kṛṣṇa, the flute sound came as a thief to steal the jewel-like hearts of the doe-eyed ones. The faces of the *gopis* looked like a cluster of fresh white lotuses opening under the cool rays of the full moon. Watching the last dim rays of the setting sun, the *gopis* merged in a state of wondrous joy. They cast away their shyness, knowing that they would soon satisfy their desire to meet the moon of Gokula. In their anxiety to see Kṛṣṇa they felt a moment to be a millenium. The pure love of the fortunate *gopis* surpassed all mental speculation.

During the time of sunset while the stars were still hidden behind the curtain of dusk, the *gopis* ascended the palace rooftops to drink the nectar from Kṛṣṇa's lotus face as He came back with the cows. Standing on the

rooftops, the glittering bodies of the *gopis* appeared like a row of stars rising over the horizon. Their exquisite beauty shone like a flag of the wealth of good fortune. The dancing of their creeper-like eyebrows spread a dark hue over the palaces.

The Yamuna River held garlands to offer to Kṛṣṇa in the form of her waves. The restless glances of the *gopis* filled the sky with alternating colors of blue and pink. Their open eyes splashed blue in all directions. And the constant blinking of their eyes covered the evening sky with a pinkish hue. It appeared as if the sky was painted with alternating clusters of blue and pink lotus flowers. The brilliance of their teeth beautified their faces when they yawned. Aglow with perfect health, the *gopis* looked like lakes full of blossoming lotuses.

Kṛṣṇa's face seemed to be a sleep-less moon. Seeing the fickle movements of the *gopis'* eyebrows, Kṛṣṇa understood they were waging a war in their minds with that clever enchanter named Cupid. Due to her constant loving ecstasy, one *gopi* felt confident of being favored by a festival that night. Overwhelmed with her cherished desire, she suddenly saw Kṛṣṇa gazing directly at her. Electrified with the thought that Kṛṣṇa might come to her house, that *gopi* joyfully glanced toward the faces of her friends.

Holding an expensive pearl necklace in her joined palms, one anxious and distressed *gopi* said, "O Kundalata! I am dying! But just nearby Kṛṣṇa is walking with the grace of a regal elephant. Please give Him this pearl necklace before He runs off to enjoy pastimes in another *gopi's* house. I will be forever indebted to you if you do this."

Another *gopi* said, "Hey *sakhi*! What can the harsh words of our superiors do to us? Why should we allow modesty to restrict us? Forgetting our fears and anxieties, let us drown in the ocean of bliss by embracing that handsome youth. With the tender creepers of our arms we will wrap ourselves tightly around that charming blue desire tree. O *sakhi*! Indeed, this is an auspicious moment. So let us go to the house of the king of Vrndavana."

Thus the *gopis* talked about Kṛṣṇa's all-attractive transcendental body. Just like great mystic *yogis*, the *gopis* withdrew their senses and completely absorbed themselves in Kṛṣṇa's delightful form. Anxious to drink the nectar

from their golden lotus faces, Kṛṣṇa looked lovingly at the *gopis*. As if directly enjoying, they embraced each other within their minds through the touch of their eyes. The *gopis* offered their glances, laden with the concentrated nectar of their affection, as gifts for Syamasundara's pleasure. Kṛṣṇa gladly accepted these gifts as He proceeded into Vṛndavana. Feeling momentarily pacified by this, the *gopis* responded with joyful smiles.

Kṛṣṇa strolled down the road surrounded by His dearest boyfriends. With great anticipation He repeatedly said, "When will I see My beloved smiling at Me and casting sidelong glances?" By stating this Kṛṣṇa revealed His cherished desire upon entering His home. Since conjugal love for Kṛṣṇa eternally resided within their hearts, the *gopis* had already realized the perfection of knowledge. Simply by beholding the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa, their minds thrilled in jubilation and their bodies displayed bumps of delight.

Like two clouds of nectar, Damodara and Balarama poured liquid bliss into the eyes of their parents. The magnificent beauty of these two boys, which is the very essence of sweetness, gave Their parents limitless happiness. Using warm water and a soft cloth, Yasoda and Rohini joyfully washed the dust from the bodies of their sons. Kṛṣṇa and Balarama appeared like a pair of elephant cubs being bathed in a river by their affectionate mothers. After bathing They looked clean and elegant. Then Their servants dressed Them in auspicious garments, applied aromatic oils, and adorned Their bodies with attractive ornaments. After eating some delicious foods, Damodara and Balarama took rest on two opulent beds. These two brothers appeared like two beautiful moons moving on the earth.

Thus ends the thirteenth chapter of *Ananda Vṛndavana Campu*, which describes Kṛṣṇa's favoring the wives of the *brahmanas* during His pastimes of youth.

Chapter Fourteen: The Spring Festival of Holi

As the rising sun beautified the blue sky with a brilliant light, Kṛṣṇa got up and dressed gorgeously like a dramatic actor. Taking His cows and friends He entered the forest of Vrndavana. Everyday Nandanandana, who satisfies the desires of all surrendered souls, roamed and played in the forest in order to remove the distress of separation felt by the forest deer, birds, and creepers.

When Kṛṣṇa went to the forest, Batu (a nickname for Madhumangala) decided to wander alone in the village of Gokula. He had a plan to open a treasure box of good fortune for the residents of Vrndavana. Batu looked somewhat funny with his thick neck and slightly bent over body as he sauntered down the road. Upon seeing Batu, the aristocratic mothers-in-law of the *gopis* suddenly approached him and welcomed him with great affection. In a submissive tone they said, “O wise one of keen intelligence! Have you studied the *Vedas* that ornament every man of knowledge?”

Smiling slightly, Batu replied, “Aho! I am a powerful astrologer fully versed in the *Agamas*. What is the use of studying other scriptures which are not very palatable to the intelligence?”

The elderly *gopis* said, “O best person in the world! Please tell us what profound truth you have discovered in all your studies?”

Batu jokingly replied, “*Hung ho!* O best ladies of Vrndavana! The *Jyotisa-sastra* (astrology) shines with great power and influence. By studying astrology one can know the good and bad events of the past, and also predict the auspicious and inauspicious things that will happen now and in the future. By worshiping the demigods described in the *Agama sastra* one obtains the power to cause or prevent things from happening. Such astrologers can make the impossible become possible, and turn the possible into the impossible.”

The *gopis* replied, “Bravo, well done! All glories to you! This time is just suitable to ask you a few questions. As *daksina* for your service we will offer you many rich tasty *laddus*. We have a very confidential question that

we cannot ask inside our houses. Please dispel our doubt. Is there any person on earth or in heaven who will not use his knowledge to benefit others?”

Smiling, Batu said, “If you give me many cows with full milk bags, I will bestow my mercy upon you. I am a wise *brahmana*, and by consulting the planetary transits I can tell you exactly what is auspicious and inauspicious. Hidden within me is the power of omniscience.”

In a jubilant mood, the *gopis* said, “The wealth of cows is like dust particles for us. If you answer our question, we can give you whatever you want from this world.”

Batu said, “Wealth does not interest me. But in order to spread my fame, I am requesting this. So now you may ask your question.”

The elderly *gopis* said, “We are chaste housewives of Vrndavana and are not feeling the slightest misery. But we have one unsolvable problem. Although our daughters-in-law are as beautiful as lotus flowers, they are not the least bit happy. From the day of their marriages they have been deaf to the names of their husbands, what to speak of looking at them.

“Where in the world can one find such ladies that find absolutely no joy in being with their husbands? Even to this day, they are proud and show aversion toward their husbands. This problem has made us completely miserable. We want to resolve this. If you can solve the problem, your fame will spread all over the world.”

Understanding the minds of the elderly *gopis*, Kusumasava (Batu) fell silent. He pretended to be deeply absorbed in meditating on Sarasvati in order to solve the *gopis*’ dilemma. First Batu acted like a big *acarya* by spending a long time in silent contemplation before responding. Then, smiling slightly and behaving comically like some big orator, he jokingly said, “O auspicious ladies! Although I am Kṛṣṇa’s friend, my happiness will be ruined if He finds out that I am helping His antagonists. Therefore you must keep these things secret and not tell anyone. Please bring some fruit and I will explain why your daughters-in-law are adverse to their husbands.”

When Batu, whose inexhaustible grace and beauty are rarely seen, received the fruit he thought deeply for a moment and spoke. “O cultured ladies!

There are two kinds of defects seen here: one material and the other spiritual. Your daughters-in-law are adverse because their husbands are full of material defects such as bad behavior and ugliness. Everyone knows about this. So what is the use of applying the wisdom of astrology to solve this problem?

“Now listen attentively as I explain the transcendental factors. Here in Vṛndavana there is one *yogini* who is against you. Her lotus feet are worshiped by the best of *yogis*. By her incredible mystic power she can bring anyone under her control, and she can even split the sun in half! That playful *yogini* is known as Yogamaya. By her illusory potency she made it look like your sons are married to particular *gopis*. Yogamaya then propagated the fact among the ignorant to make them think it was a real marriage. She also created the bad qualities in your sons, and the antagonistic mood found in your daughters-in-law.

“Your daughters-in-law and their husbands are not fit to live together, therefore, Yogamaya has personally prohibited your sons from even touching their wives. Using her tremendous power, Yogamaya will soon make your daughters-in-law give up any sense of being married to your sons. But if you are very affectionate toward your daughters-in-law, then that *yogini* will become favorable and help you.

“Moreover, if you want your sons to become fortunate then you should make sure they do not even touch their wives. Your sons are very unhappy when they hear that Kṛṣṇa attracts their wives, and forcibly embraces them with His long serpentine arms. But soon your sons will become very happy and prosperous when their wives glance favorably upon them like the goddess of fortune.”

Although overwhelmed by Batu’s words and feeling great distress, the elderly *gopis* hoped that something auspicious would happen soon. In that mood, the *gopis* said, “O Batu, you are the embodiment of truth. Surely your words are not the statements of a mere child, but rather the wisdom of an omniscient *brahmana*. Indeed, you are a competent astrologer. Now please show us the power you have obtained by mastering the *Agamas*. Please teach us how to carefully worship the appropriate demigods so that we can prevent that *yogini* from harassing our sons.”

Madhumangala said, “You can appease that angry *yogini* by worshiping another demigod who is supremely pure, imperishable, and infallible.”

Gaining relief from Batu’s words, the elderly *gopis* expressed their appreciation by offering him a valuable necklace. Then the *gopis* said gleefully, “O Batu! You are a mine of the best jewel-like qualities. Please tell us who is that demigod and what is his nickname? Tell us all the details about worshiping him.”

Batu replied, “O fortunate ones! You are very effulgent and your speech sounds like lovely singing. There is a demigod named Kandarpa who resides in Vrndavana as the *kunja devata*, the personified lord of the love groves. His body is the color of a rain cloud. He is ever youthful and transcendental. That *yogini* Yogamaya, who enchants all the demigods, always remains submissive to this youthful personality known as Kandarpa. By His sweet will Kandarpa satisfies the cherished desires of the *gopis* whose eyes are beautified with *kajala*. If you can please this demigod, then you will always be happy. But if you anger him, even Sankara Mahadeva cannot save you.

“That demigod delights in sporting from one forest grove to another. Although no one can see him, those who worship him with unalloyed devotion can see him in meditation. The method of his worship is very difficult and it must be performed at exactly the right time. Only those who perform meritorious works can worship him.

“Listen attentively as I describe how to worship him. First you must adorn yourself with very costly jewels and smear your bodies with attractive ointments. Rejecting the opinion of others, you must give up your shyness and go to Vrndavana to pick flowers. You must abandon all other talks and constantly fix your mind only on him.

“You must be free from any cheating mentality. Then you can worship him according to all the rules and regulations. You should go to one grove after another, and worship that youthful Kandarpa three times a day with incense, lamps, flowers, and fragrant substances. After the worship is finished, he will lay down on a bed of fresh tender leaves, remaining awake the whole night with his friends.

“Besides perfectly fulfilling your cherished desires, this *puja* will give you the power to control anyone in the world if you do the *puja* in the morning, noon, and night. There are many *mantras* to worship this demigod, but the best one is the Gopala *mantra*. If you have faith in me, I will tell you that *mantra*.”

The elderly *gopis* said, “O Balacarya! Without a *mantra* how can one worship Kandarpa? O revered one! May your fame spread in all directions. Please teach us that *mantra*, and we will give it to our daughters-in-law.”

Batu said, “O ladies! You have spoken correctly. Now may that demigod who possesses the unlimited wealth of six opulences be happy with you. Considering the time and place, I will instruct you in the proper *mantra*. The *mantra* is “*acintya mahase kunja devatayai rasatmane svaha*.” (I offer myself to the great inconceivable lord of the love groves who forever relishes tasty mellows).

“This concludes the method of worshiping that beautiful and splendorous *kunja devata*. Now go to a lonely place and nicely worship the *kunja devata*. Just as a raging river spills over its banks, similarly, by the flood of his mercy you will overcome all unfavorable situations. In that way, Yogamaya will become powerless before you. Everything I told you is in the *Agamas* and *Jyotisa-sastra*. By doing this you will also receive my favor.”

After successfully deceiving the old ladies with these secret teachings, which were laced with many funny hidden meanings, that *brahmacari* quickly left them. The elderly *gopis* affectionately accepted the words of that expert talker and returned to their homes. Without envy they instructed their daughters-in-law, who beamed like the attractive flames of *ghee* lamps, in the worship of the *kunja devata*.

The elderly *gopis* said, “O Bauma! (an affectionate term for the wife of one’s son) You come from a high-class family. Indeed, you are famous for your kindness and refined qualities, which crush the pride of the celestial women. But we also see many defects in you that are not found even among the women on earth. One of your main faults is your aversion to your husbands.

“We do not even want to see our enemies having this fault. Therefore we will tell you a *vrata* which we learned from the *brahmana* Madhumangala. By happily observing this *vrata* you can quickly remove this obstacle to your good fortune, make your husband happy, increase your devotion to him, and please your superiors. You must take a vow to wander through the *kunjās* of Vrndavana constantly worshiping Kandarpa, the demigod who fulfills the desires of everyone.”

Not believing their ears, the daughters-in-law adopted a mood of astonishment and displeasure with this suggestion. The young *gopis* thought, “What are they saying? Are our mothers-in-law testing us? Or maybe they have discovered our secret love?” Their minds vacillating in confusion, they sat down silently. Before making a response they wanted to hear their mothers-in-law disclose everything from beginning to end.

While the daughters-in-law sat silently, the elderly *gopis*, in order to hide their defects from the people in general, privately instructed them in the vows and methods for worshiping the *devata* known as Kandarpa. The younger *gopis* thought, “Our mothers-in-law are giving us joy and satisfaction by pouring this *rasayana* (*ayurvedic* rejuvenator) into our ears. Kusumasava has certainly created a grand festival for us.”

Their bodies glowing with beauty and feeling great relief, the *gopis* spontaneously replied to their mothers-in-law, “O cultured ladies of Vrndavana! Are there any wives who would not submissively follow the instructions of their mothers-in-law? Even if we become lean and thin, we are ready to go to the forest and execute this *vrata*. Why should we waste our lives staying at home? We should not wait another minute. Let us go immediately! Your instructions given to increase our fortune sound as sweet as a melodious song.”

The daughters-in-law promised to follow the orders of their mothers-in-law who no longer prevented them from going to Vrndavana to pick flowers. Everyday those restless, fortunate girls joyfully went to Vrndavana. Instead of chastising them, their elders now praised and encouraged them. With great difficulty the *gopis* tried to restrain the chariots of their minds, and keep their poise as they walked past their superiors and relatives.

Driven by minds permeated with Kṛṣṇa *prema*, the *gopis* quickly arrived in Vṛndavana. At that time, Kṛṣṇa, adorned with a charming pearl necklace, played in a neighboring forest. Infatuated by their totally pure love for Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* pulsated with desire to receive His delightful glance.

Meanwhile back in the village, the Vraja *kumaris* (unmarried *gopis*) intensely hankered to please Kṛṣṇa with their conjugal love. But they were neither old enough, nor allowed to go out to “worship” Kāṇḍarpa. The faces of these restless young *gopis* radiated a pale pink glow due to their *bhava*. Having recently completed their *katyayani vrata* and receiving Kṛṣṇa’s promise to accept them, these young *gopis* could no longer keep their patience.

Dhanya-sakhi and the other Vraja *kumaris* were full of anxiety. Their throats choked up and their gorgeous golden faces turned pale due to frustration. Seeing the distressed condition of their daughters, their aristocratic mothers also felt depressed. Contemplating how to help them, they said, “O dear daughters! Did Yogamaya-devi create some special auspiciousness in your hearts by giving you an enchanting order?”

Tarangavati, the daughter of a nurse, said, “*Hung ho!* Dear mothers! Please listen attentively to my words. Regarding your question, how can you expect all the girls to answer you? If you want to know what is wrong, then listen and I will tell you. This is the custom of a daughter born in a good family.

“At the right time, I will tell whatever I know. Since I am honest and very close to you all, I can tell you everything as it is. Previously your daughters worshiped and pleased the famous Yogamaya-devi, who is unattainable by all the demigods. At that time, Yogamaya blessed them all with a divine command.

“Yogamaya said, ‘Within a short time, all of you will see a very exalted and majestic personality who by the rays of his effulgence derides all other powers. I have never seen such an influential personality. He is like the sun, the lord of the lotuses, and his body is deep blue in color like a royal bumblebee. He will be your husband and your power and prestige will exceed the goddess of fortune. Besides following the vow to get a husband, there is something else you should do to achieve success in your endeavor.

“Yogamaya continued, ‘Because you have faith in me, I am affectionately telling this to you. Please be patient and listen as I explain more. When your attachment to other things ceases, then try to follow my instructions. O girls possessing matchless qualities! In the forest of Vrndavana there is a goddess named Vrnda who is very compassionate by nature. Since she has the power of fulfillment, she is always thinking how to satisfy the cherished desires of the devotees.’

Tarangavati-sakhi continued, “Therefore, dear ladies, it is not a good idea to prevent your daughters from going to Vrndavana. This forest is completely spiritual. By living there many devotees have achieved the fruits of their austerities. One who serves this forest can immediately attain his desired goal. Please give them permission to go, so that they can complete the work directed by Yogamaya-devi.”

After hearing these words with great delight, the mothers consented by slightly smiling at their anxious daughters. Obtaining sanction from their mothers, all the young unmarried *gopis* like Dhanya-sakhi wandered in the various groves of Vrndavana. With the arrival of spring the different types of *vraja gopis* enjoyed many hilarious pastimes. The married *gopis* started the fun by sneaking off to the forest to pick flowers. Then the unmarried *gopis*, who had previously worshiped Katyayani, took permission from their mothers to worship Kandarpa. Without anyone’s knowledge they also worshiped Vrnda-devi. Now these intelligent *gopis* could enter the forest of Vrndavana and attain the intimate association of Kṛṣṇa.

The tender petals of the *kunda* flowers of spring broke the fierce tusks of the elephant of winter. The spring season arrived in the form of a playful lion cub showing his teeth as the stamens of the flowers. The southern breezes forced the chills of winter to depart. It appeared as if the nostrils of personified time had now opened and started breathing in and out.

The juncture of winter and spring seemed like the period between boyhood and adolescence. The tender creepers exploded with new buds. The cuckoos sang a sweet melody, but not the fifth note of “*kuu huu, kuu huu*” which lovers murmur at union. Though the southern breezes had begun, they were weak due their lingering attachment to the Malaya Hills. It seemed the buds, birds, and breezes simultaneously awaited the departure of the winter season.

The creepers looked like pregnant ladies waiting to give birth to fresh flowers. With their gentle humming the bumblebees inquired repeatedly from all directions about the location of spring. Moreover, immediately upon smelling the fragrance, the cuckoos took shelter in the treetops to savor the fresh mango blossoms. After eating them they made sweet drawn out tunes of “*kuu huu! kuu huu!*” It seems the cuckoos sang softly in fear that the spring season may not arrive with their favorite food of fresh mango sprouts.

The forest welcomed the spring season with the sweet fragrances of fresh flowers. With the disappearance of winter, the forest beamed with delight like a man feeling fresh and clean after bathing. The creepers appeared to be smeared with rich aromas. Overwhelmed with joy, the birds sang happily.

It seemed that the wives of the directions smiled favorably at the arrival of the spring season. Sandalwood paste appeared as moonshine to pleasantly anoint the night. The Malayan breezes moving here and there carried the sweet flavor of fragrant flowers. The bumblebees returning to their hives appeared to be tied up together as they moved about with each other. The mango trees filled with tiny bumps of joy from the touch of the awakening *madhavi* creepers. What more can be said about the arrival of spring? It seemed as if Kandarpa had just changed his body.

Vr̥ndavana is beautified with the different periods of the six seasons manifested in different places. But to nourish Kṛṣṇa’s sweet pastimes the sequence of seasons sometimes changes to suit His needs. For example, sometimes the dewy season comes after winter, or spring season follows the rainy season. Sometimes all the seasons combine, approach the Lord, and ask if they can serve Him.

With the arrival of spring, Syamasundara, greedy for pleasure and full of *prema*, decided to stage a wonderful pastime to fulfill the desires of the girls of Gokula whose hearts surged with *sr̥ngara rasa*. The hearts of the *gopis* moved with the speed of the wind to meet the Prince of Vr̥ndavana, who embodies all good fortune. The *vanadevis* incited the forest to explode with unlimited beauty and fresh fragrances. Kṛṣṇa, the ocean of elegance, appeared like a dramatic artist dressed in colorful garments.

The *camari* deer prepared the stage by sweeping the forest floor with their bushy tails. The honey nectar dripping from the flowers moistened the rich soil. Wandering *kasturi* deer scented the air with the heady fragrance of musk. Swarms of intoxicated bees danced in mid-air and buzzed among the flowering creepers.

On Vasanta Pancami, the first day of spring, Syamasundara, whose joyfully sweet and sportive nature spread in all directions, filled the horizon with the reflection of His beautiful blue complexion. By His inconceivable potency spring burst into bloom throughout the land of Vrndavana. The Vrajavasis mistook the nectar shower of Kṛṣṇa's sweet beauty to be an unexpected monsoon rain.

The eyes, ears, and minds of the Vrajavasis tingled with joy upon hearing that spring had arrived, and that Kṛṣṇa hankered to enjoy a festival. The hearts of the moon-faced *gopis* throbbed with anxiety to meet their beloved. Overpowered by the intoxication of spring and a strong desire to attend the festival, Radhika, Candravali, Syama-devi, and all their respective girlfriends abandoned their shyness and ran to the forest.

With great love and affection Vrnda-devi and her *vanadevis* appropriately decorated Radhika and *gopis* for the joyous festival of spring. They dressed them in colorful clothing, fresh flowers, and the sixteen types of items of ornamentation. The *gopis* remembered the boon that Kṛṣṇa had given them when He snatched their clothes while they bathed in the Yamuna.

At that time Kṛṣṇa said, "O My dear *sakhis*! In some future night you will enjoy confidential pastimes with Me." Because the *gopis* had fixed their minds on the desire to attain Kṛṣṇa they felt a moment to be like a million milleniums. The *vanadevis* were amazed at the sight of the assembled *gopis* that looked like a garden full of rows and rows of the best quality golden creepers. The *vanadevis* dressed the *gopis*, their revered objects of love, in clothing suitable for the spring festival.

Vrnda felt very joyful as she personally decorated Radhika with flower ornaments. She set white lilies in Radhika's hair and placed a *bakula* garland across Her hairline that seemed to kiss Radha's forehead. Then Vrnda-devi adorned Radha's hair part with deftly placed red *asoka* flowers,

hung mango buds hung over Her ears, and covered Her breasts with a *vasanti* garland.

Due to their enthusiasm to enjoy the festival of spring, the *vanadevis* competed with each other in order to quickly finish their work. They bragged to each other, “I will do the dressing.” Another one said, “No, I will do it.” As a final touch they smeared the bodies of Candravali and other *gopis* with sandalwood pulp and offered them splendid flower garlands. The gorgeous *gopis* further beautified the forest.

The *gopis* wrapped their bodies in *saris* covered with gold *jari*. They wore brightly colored blouses and veils of the finest soft cloth. They chewed *tambula*, smeared sandal pulp on their bodies, and sported fragrant flower garlands. The different articles used to adorn the *gopis* came from the desire trees and creepers growing abundantly everywhere in Vrndavana. The desire trees also produced the flower bombs for celebrating Holi. These bombs, made of different colored, perfumed powders packed in *lac*, were so fragile that they would break open just by breathing on them. The desire trees provided other weapons such as flower bows and arrows, *pichkaris* (jeweled-syringes for squirting liquid colors) and musk paste.

When spring appeared, Matangi, a Kinnari goddess who is an *acarya* of music, and her female ensemble of expert *vina* players came to play for the festival. The *vasanta raga* (spring tune) personified accompanied Matangi as an attractively dressed woman. The personified forms of *sapta svara* (seven notes) and *sruti* (marginal notes) also followed her.

Matangi approached Radhika, the greatest among the lotus-eyed *gopis* having beautiful, bashful bodies overflowing with affection. Although she is an excellent speaker, Matangi flooded with happiness and fell silent when she stood before Radhika. Seeing this, Vrnda said, “Hey Radhe! You are an unlimited reservoir of the best qualities! Please have faith in my words when I say that these ladies are fantastic musicians.” Pointing to Matangi, Vrnda said, “This is Matangi, the master of all masters of music. Even the Kinnaris (famous celestial singers) learn from her! O supremely cultured and worshipable lady!

“Whose mind will not be elated by participating in this flourishing festival of spring? Matangi has come here along with all her musical paraphernalia

just to please You. Her associates are experts in playing *vina*. Here is Vasanta-raga, pleasant and elegant with her jeweled-crown, deep blue dress, and the peacock feather in her hair. She is feeding soft fresh mango buds to the cuckoos. By nature she is maddened with ecstasy.”

Seeing Vasanta-raga displaying an irresistible joy, Radhika remembered Syamasundara and looked at her curiously. Dressed as a young girl, Vasanta-raga considered herself fortunate to have received a glance from Radharani. Then Matangi, the expert musician who walks with the grace of a she elephant, said, “O beloved of Kṛṣṇa, who vanquished Kaliya by dancing on his hoods! The twelve associates of *sruti* and the seven associates of *svara* have come with me in order to serve Your lotus feet. Just hear how their singing far surpasses that of the Kinnaris.”

On hearing their artistic singing, Lalita said joyfully, “Hey Sangita-devi! (a second name for Matangi) Even the wives of the King of the Kinnaras could not equal their excellence in singing.”

Matangi replied, “O Lalita! *Sruti* will not manifest in a voice full of mucus. Regarding *vinas*, Brahma created two types: one fretted and one non-fretted. There are twenty-two shrill notes in a non-fretted *vina* and seven in a fretted one. What more can I say? O worshipable one! Soon you can test them yourself by glancing over the *srutis*. Once you hear the sixth note along with its four *srutis*, then conviction will remove your doubts. Although pleasant to hear, it is impossible to comprehend.”

Saying this, Matangi, the expert musician, sang the tonic note (*sadja*) and its four distinct marginal notes by using the unfretted *vina*. The marginal notes could be distinguished, manifesting themselves according to the pitch of the *vina*. The strings of the unfretted *vina* can be played to give the correct intonation, which is as reliable as the *Vedas*.

After Matangi pleased everyone with her singing, a *sakhi* named Sangita-vidya spoke jokingly with hidden intentions. She said, “Matangi, you have very expertly sung the four marginal notes along with the *vina*. But you did not sing even a single micro tone of the seventh or the second note of the scale. Of course, knowledge of the notes is very difficult for human beings.

“But Lalita-sakhi, Radhika’s dear friend, can sing all the divisions of the notes. If you want, Lalita can demonstrate her singing perfection. Though

you may be unfamiliar with the marginal notes of each note because they tend to blend in the note, Lalita can reveal all the twenty-two marginal notes separately by her knowledge of the sound of each micro tone.”

When she spoke in this way, the forest deities said, “O Sangita-vidya! The knowledge of music that Matangi has just recited originates from the mouth of Brahma. But what you have spoken is beyond the universe manifested by Brahma. But both systems are faultless.”

Radhika worried that Matangi may have felt offended by this conversation. So knitting Her brow, She said, “Hey Sangita-vidya with false intelligence! You are a liar so you should stop speaking. Clearly distinguishing the marginal notes as Matangi has just sung could never be done by Laksmi, the demigods, and what to speak of Lalita-sakhi. Therefore Matangi-devi is the best of musicians. Now let her satisfy Vrnda-devi and the forest deities with her singing.”

Vrnda said, “Matangi, until Kṛṣṇa arrives you should not sing the *vasanta raga*. You can sing another *raga* with an attractive new melody.”

According to the request, Matangi exquisitely sang the *belabeli raga*, which flowed like a pool of water from the ocean of *rasa*. She produced five varieties of marginal notes by mixing Her voice with the sound of four types of *vinas*—the festive *mahati*, the playful *kavilasika*, the tortoise-shaped *kacchapi*, and the broad-bodied *svaramandalika*. The musicians played each micro tone exactly in pitch with her voice, and thus satisfied the ears of everyone. The powerful singing, attractive music, and the vibration of the *vinas* at that festival transported everyone into a realm of divine bliss.

Sri Radha, the *gopis*, Vrnda-devi and the *vanadevis* listened with rapt attention to the sterling performance of Matangi-devi. Her singing, backed by *vinas*, *mrdangas*, flutes, gongs, and drums, vibrated so sweetly that even the demigods fell into enchantment. The music floated through the air for a long distance. Anyone who heard it felt invigorated throughout his body.

Hearing Matangi’s musical concert with its wonderful rhythm and tune, *srngara rasa* personified entered the *gopis’* hearts and caused their lotus petal eyes to bloom wide. The *gopis* looked nervously from side to side like frightened deer in a forest. As the *gopis* stood on the forest path listening to

the *vasanta raga*, one of Radhika's *sakhis* took the form of that *raga* and sang happily.

Upon hearing that *raga*, Nanda Kishora, the embodiment of unlimited bliss, initiated a unique spring festival, which no one had ever seen before. The *gopis* absorbed their minds in Kṛṣṇa when they saw Him approaching them with a desire to enjoy. The sweetness of their beautiful bodies increased as fresh waves of ecstasy rose within them.

One *gopi* said, "O Radhika! Your eyes are shining with the same excitement that You reveal when intimately enjoying with Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa always reigns as the Lord of Your heart. Coming before us as personified spring, Kṛṣṇa is full of ecstasy and dressed as a daring dramatic dancer. He is carrying various paraphernalia for sporting. Just see how that proud Cupid shines among His friends. He looks like the full moon surrounded by its entourage of stars. O Radhe! How much can persons like us describe the extent of your glorious good fortune?

"Look! Look! His effulgent white turban appears especially splendid sitting obliquely on His head. It is decorated with bunches of flowers, sprinkled with fragrant reddish powder, and surrounded by buzzing bumblebees shaking His peacock feather. Tiny fresh mango flowers hang from His ears, which are slightly elongated from the weight of His elegant jeweled earrings. His earrings swing enchantingly to cast exotic reflections on His cheeks. A beautiful *malati* garland mixed with some sweet *tulasi manjaris* surrounds His neck.

His curly dark blue hair is tied back ready for sporting. Kṛṣṇa wears glittering yellow garments just suitable for His spring pastimes. His jeweled waist-bells dance, and a sachet of camphor is tucked in His attractive gem-studded belt. Natural belts made of *jute* encircle His handsome hips. The ankle-bells on Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet are jingling a sweet tune of "*runu jhunu! runu jhunu!*"

While listening to the *vasanta raga*, Kṛṣṇa held a flute in His left hand and a ball of red powder in His right hand. Subala and other close friends stood beside Him. Relishing that sweet song, Kṛṣṇa moved His head in time with the tune. His eyes rolled in intoxication as if tired from conjugal pleasure. Some cowherd boys offered Him fresh *tambula* wrapped in golden *pan*

leaves. While relishing the *tambula*, Kṛṣṇa's lips turned reddish from the drops of *betel* juice.

Soon Kṛṣṇa and His boyfriends inaugurated the spring festival of Holi by singing, dancing, and throwing balls of fine reddish powder in all directions. The lightweight, sweet smelling powder just floated in the air. As it gradually fell down, it beautifully colored and scented Kṛṣṇa's turban, hair, eyelids, and *tilaka*. Kṛṣṇa's friends sang *carcari* and *dvipadika* songs in the *vasanta raga* with clear marginal notes and notes in the three scales. In this way they blissfully danced and played while repeatedly throwing red powder balls at each other.

One *gopi* said to Radhika, "Look! Just see! The unconscious things have come alive from hearing their singing. Overjoyed by the glance of Kṛṣṇa, the forest creepers display ecstatic symptoms. The gentle breezes from the Malayan Hills appear as a *guru* to teach the forest creepers how to dance. With their new leaves they exhibit various *mudras* (hand positions) to go along with the song of the bees.

"When someone tries to pick the honey sweet flowers, the creepers seem to shiver in fear with their quivering buds. Their blossoming flowers appear like exuberant laughter. Then they show anger by frowning with their eyebrows appearing as the swarms of bees. One creeper, seeing Kṛṣṇa's impulsive nature and being moved by the wind, covered her flower cluster breast with the leaf of her left hand. With the leaf of her right hand she beckoned her friends for help while shyly smiling with the blossoming flower of her face. Therefore, Radhika, I tell You. In this Vrndaavana, how is it possible to remain patient and control one's intelligence during such an ecstatic Holi festival?"

Understanding Radhika's inner mood, Syama-sakhi said, "O Vrnda-devi! Why are you agitating us while giving bliss to the moon-like Syamasundara? You know we can never go against your will. So quickly arrange the joyous Holi festival and thereby bring unlimited happiness to all of us.

"By nature the door of shyness creates an obstacle in the houses of the married *gopis'* bodies. At the same time, their eagerness to love Kṛṣṇa is so strong that even an axe cannot cut it. Their minds are constantly full of

anguish. Although they tolerate it with unrivaled patience, they are in a terribly unfortunate condition.

“To remove their misfortune, the *gopis* should definitely do some worship on this auspicious day of the spring festival. During the time of picking flowers it will be easy for us to perform that *puja*. O *sakhis*! You are the embodiments of auspiciousness and expert in all the arts. Let us celebrate the festival of spring with that honorable prince of Vraja.”

After hearing Syama-sakhi’s timely words arousing conjugal love, Vrnda spoke to the Queen of Vrndavana, “O Radhika! I understand that in name, beauty, form, and gentle behavior there is one other *sakhi* who is eligible to hear the songs of Matangi. Just now Candravali and Carucandra-sakhi are making some curious sounds as they advance with their party to celebrate the festival of Holi. It appears that they are illuminating this mango grove with a pleasant effulgence. Indeed, Matangi, the embodiment of all the *srutis* and *svaras* of the *vasanta raga*, has become successful by intoxicating everyone with her joyous singing. Although also immersed in that ecstasy, she has not lost her self-control.”

After honoring Radhika with her words, Vrnda engaged in the service of Candravali. She told Matangi to sing pleasing tunes with the expanded *srutis* that always manifest in spring. Matangi’s singing defeated the splendor of the rising golden sun. Within a moment, the desire to observe a grand festival arose from the desire tree of Candravali’s heart.

Then Candravali and her *sakhis* joyfully threw colors to celebrate Holi. They squirted forceful streams of fragrant colored liquids on each other with elegant jeweled inlaid *pichkaris* (syringes). The streams of water were sensually pleasing mixtures of sandalwood paste, camphor, *kasturi*, *kunkuma*, and *golak* diluted in water. While squirting each other they sang and danced around in time with the music of the *vasanta-raga*. In great fun they also threw flower bombs of scented red powder on each other. Being driven by the Cupid elephant of blissful enjoyment, Candravali and her *gopi* friends, whose beauty derided millions of heavenly goddesses, happily sported in the spring festival.

Meanwhile, Sri Radha, whose joyful captivating smile is sweeter than honey, surprised everyone by Her behavior. First She cast restless glances in

the direction of Kṛṣṇa and then She looked at Candravali. Then suddenly for no apparent reason, Radhika abruptly wandered away on the pretext of picking flowers.

The prince of Vrndavana, who disseminates limitless joy, played Holi with His young friends while dancing down the road towards the forest where the *gopis* had assembled. Batu jumped around continually while raising and lowering his head in a funny way as he lead the party. The necklaces on his chest swung pleasantly from his comic movements. While making everyone laugh, Batu looked in all directions as if searching for something.

In the distance Batu heard the sounds and laughter of another Holi festival. He heard the sweet jingling of the *gopis*' ankle-bells and bangles as they rhythmically danced through the forest. He also heard the music of *vinas*, *mrdangas*, and *murtajas* mixing with the sweet singing of Candravali, Carucandra, and other *sakhis* as they stood in a circle clapping their hands. The blend of these sounds created a charming concert of enchanting music.

Hearing that music increased Madhumangala's enthusiasm to relish the Holi festival. In a blissful mood, he spoke to his dear friend, "O Kṛṣṇa! Is it the echo of our own singing that we hear? Or is it someone else's sweet songs challenging ours? If it is not our singing, then let us find out who it is."

Adorned with gems and ornaments, Kṛṣṇa, the crest-jewel of handsome youths, replied to Batu, "O graceful one! That music is from someone else! But how come this music is mixing with ours and at the same time overpowering it? Go find it's source."

Feeling ecstatic, Batu ran quickly toward that jingling sound. There he saw Radharani, who is praised as the crest-jewel of all beautiful women including Laksmi, who has charming simplicity, who has reddish palms more delicate than *jaba* flowers, who graces the earth with Her transcendental form, and who appears like the personified beauty of spring picking *madhavi* flowers.

Batu said, "O impudent Lalita! Why do you sit on a mountain of pride? It is astonishing that you are acting so offensively. Don't you know that today is the first day of the spring festival? My friend Kṛṣṇa is just nearby anxious to enjoy many pastimes in this *madhavi* grove. Therefore we have not

picked any flowers in this garden. You, however, are so arrogant that you have taken all the *madhavi* leaves and flowers which were meant for Kṛṣṇa.

“Are you not familiar with the snake-like arms of my friend who crushes the pride of Kandarpa? *Accha!* All right! Soon you will come to know. Just wait here while I go tell Him what you have done.”

Running back to Kṛṣṇa, Batu said, “My dear friend! It seems Your opulent spring festival will soon reach its climax. Vasanta Laksmi, the personified beauty of spring, and all her expanded potencies are not far from here. With various tasteful arrangements she gives new life to the joyous festival of spring.”

“The unique singing of the *gopis* which is accompanied by *mrdangas*, *vinas*, cymbals, and horns cannot be found anywhere on earth. What to speak of earth, even the greatest celestial singers cannot comprehend it. Besides that, they have collected more paraphernalia to celebrate Holi than can be found anywhere else in the creation of Brahma. The people of this world cannot even imagine it. Alas! I have seen great fun. Kṛṣṇa, although You are the son of the King of Vrndavana, the size of Your Holi festival cannot compare with theirs.”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “O Batu! Why are you glorifying and showing so much respect to the enemy? You should praise your own camp and not give them any importance. Of course, I understand the inner mood of your heart. It appears that you have become bewildered from drinking honey wine, and therefore you are acting like an intoxicated person.”

Kusumasava said, “There is an *ayurvedic* medicine known as *kusumasava*. But I am not that *kusumasava*. I mean to say that I am not the honey wine made from the *kusuma* flower which people drink and become intoxicated. Yet somehow people get intoxicated just by drinking my words.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “Well done! Well done My friend! If you have not lost your enthusiasm, then go back and see what the *gopis* are up to. We will meet up with you later.”

Overwhelmed with joy, the humorous Batu returned to the *gopis*. Then he said boldly, “O Durlalita! (foul player or mischievous Lalita-sakhi) On the order of my lotus-eyed friend, you should immediately stop picking our

madhavi flowers and get out of this forest. Otherwise you will be severely punished!”

Lalita said, “O shameless, deceitful *brahmana* boy! Why are you spoiling your aristocratic birth by blaspheming others? The flawless wives of the *gopas* have gathered under this *asoka* tree on the bank of the Yamuna in order to worship Vasanta Madana (Cupid) on this auspicious day of the spring festival. This tradition comes down through a long line of well-behaved, gentle souls.

“Today the jewel-like heroine Radhika, who is the most chaste housewife in Vrndavana, who is highly moral, and who possesses all good qualities has also joined us. Although Radhika has many maidservants, She has personally come to perform this important Madana (Cupid) *puja*. So why have you come here blubbering like a crazy fellow?”

Batu said, “*Are*, Lalita! Apart from Hari, what other Cupid is there? Kṛṣṇa easily cuts down the pride of Cupid, maddens everyone with desire, and is always intoxicated by it Himself. Ignoring the real Cupid, why have you become attached to worshiping some mundane Cupid? Obviously, you must be crazy! Listen, I will do you a favor and be the priest for your Madana *puja*. I will chant the benedictory *mantras*, and guide you in performing splendorous worship of Cupid. Now come along and I will take you to Him.”

Radhika said, “Hey Lalite! This expert *brahmana* is certainly worthy of our worship. Tell Candravali and Carucandra to bring good fortune to our village by respectfully worshiping this priest.”

Overcome by the spirit of Holi, Candravali and Carucandra forcibly grabbed Batu and covered him from head to toe with varieties of red and purple colors to make him look just like Bhutaraja Siva, the king of the ghosts.

Madhumangala screamed, “Hey Kṛṣṇa! Intoxicated with the joy of Holi, the shameless *gopis* have gone crazy. I cannot run away because they have blinded me with *sindura*, *kunkuma*, and other fragrant powders. I am also stunned from the colored water they threw over me. Kṛṣṇa! Quickly save me before they commit the sin of killing a *brahmana* on this auspicious day of Holi.”

Hearing Batu's loud crying in the distance, Kṛṣṇa understood that the simple girls of Vrndavana had diminished His reputation. Running there quickly with His friends, Kṛṣṇa said, "*Hala! Hala! Aho!* What a funny scene!"

The proud *gopis* glanced at Kṛṣṇa with a mixed mood of fear, respect, and shyness. Seeing Batu sad, silent, and totally defeated, Kṛṣṇa, pretending to be angry, said, "*Hung ho!* Why have you loved-blinded ladies abused and harassed My innocent friend? Which lowly person is responsible for this offense? Now you will be justly punished!"

Kṛṣṇa, an expert fighter, attacked the *gopis* by hitting them between the breasts with a volley of *asoka* flower balls. The celestial demigoddesses enthusiastically glorified Kṛṣṇa. Afterwards a fierce fight broke out between the *gopas* and the *gopis*. They threw fragrant red powder balls, and squirted each other with heavenly scented, colored water that felt soft and soothing.

A barrage of colors blanketed all directions. Being light in weight, the colored powders just floated and swirled around in sky to block the sun and create dense darkness. Although nobody could see each other, both sides fought equally. Suddenly, Kṛṣṇa boldly entered a phalanx of *gopis*. Vibrating like the sweet sound of Cupid's drum, Kṛṣṇa's flute resounded triumphantly during the battle of Eros. The *gopis* fought heroically in that war against their beloved Syama. To counteract the weapon of Kṛṣṇa's enchanting flute, the *gopis* surrounded Him and shot Him with the sharpened arrows of their sidelong glances.

Somehow Kṛṣṇa mounted a ferocious counter offensive and got free from the clutches of the *gopis*. But being greedy for more pastimes, Kṛṣṇa pulled back the bowstring of His dancing eyebrows and shot the *gopis* with the *samprasvapana* (sleep-inducing) arrow of His glance. Instantly, the *gopis* felt dizzy and drowsy. Totally fatigued, they yawned and rolled their eyes lazily. Slumping forward, they fell asleep with their chins resting on their chests.

Seeing her army stunned and immobilized, Candravali, the commander-in-chief of the doe-eyed ones, boldly stepped forward to display her prowess. She tried to pierce Kṛṣṇa's heart with her fluttering eyelids and arrow-like

glances. Attempting to enchant the enchanter of the world, she locked Syamasundara in a tight embrace with her snake-like arms.

After some time, Kṛṣṇa gave up His rapture and resumed His attack on the phalanxes of *gopis*. Kissing them, snapping their necklaces, and ripping open their blouses, Kṛṣṇa appeared like an elephant in rut, trumpeting joyfully while trampling clumps of lotuses in a forest. The battlefield looked astonishing after the fog of colored powders settled.

Red powder completely covered both the *gopis* and the sporting field. The colored water and musk drops dripping off the bodies of the *gopis* muddied the ground. The Holi battlefield appeared to be sprinkled with the blood from an elephant devastated by an angry lion. The musk drops on the ground looked like bumblebees smelling that blood. Lying on the ground, the fallen *pichkaris* of the *gopis* looked like the teeth and bones of that elephant scattered across the forest floor.

The *gopis*' defeat drowned Madhumangala in an ocean of happiness. Raising his arms, he joyfully danced and shouted, "Hee! Hee! Well done Kṛṣṇa! Bravo! In my whole life I have never felt so good. O Muralidhara! That's what they get for putting Your dear friend into such extreme distress.

"Just see how the *gopis*' blouses are torn and their carefully strung necklaces are crushed to dust. All their *puja* paraphernalia is strewn here and there. Their hair, faces, and breasts are covered with colors. They got just what they deserved. But alas, my dear friend! We better watch out, because they can outwit anyone in Brahma's creation. If they again join forces with their leader Radharani, they will violently attack us in great numbers. Driven by anger, those *gopis*, who are hostile by nature, could do anything to us. So let us run away from here before that happens."

While smiling, some cowherd boys said, "Talkativeness is Batu's natural defect. Because of his fickle mind, one minute he acts boldly and the next moment he shivers in fright. O Kṛṣṇa! Console Batu and keep him from panicking and becoming disturbed again."

Kṛṣṇa said, "O Kusumasava! Give up your cowardice. Show Me those *gopis* whom you fear. Why should you be afraid in My presence?"

Feeling reassured and confident, Kusumasava continued the battle. Boldly jumping forward, he pointed toward the *gopis* and said, "This way! This

way!”

Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys went to a garden of *madhavi* creepers wherein Radhika, Lalita, and other *sakhis* picked flowers. In great joy, the *gopis* attacked Hari with millions of restless sidelong glances. Kṛṣṇa shot back the arrow of His love-laden glance. Hitting Radhika’s breast, that arrow pierced the armor of Her shyness to release a splendor that radiated in all directions. Radhika retaliated with the arrow of Her sidelong glance, which was coated with the deadly poison of the *kajala* surrounding Her beautiful blue eyes and sharpened by Her brightly beaming smile. That arrow mercilessly pierced the heart of Kṛṣṇa.

Seeing his friend completely devastated by Radha’s glance, Batu swelled in ecstasy. Shaking his hands and turning his head from side to side, Batu said, “My dear friend! Do not become bewildered while I am here to help You. Take this flower bomb and douse them in colors! Alas! What is impossible for one who has a friend like me?”

Though weary from the pastime of Holi, Vrsabhanunandini suddenly gained new enthusiasm. Radhika’s eyes bloomed wide and Her eyebrows moved elegantly like the movements of a swan. Her golden bangles rang loudly proclaiming victory as She took a vermilion flower bomb in Her lotus palm and fired it at Kṛṣṇa’s chest. This broke Kṛṣṇa’s rapture. Then to the delight of all the *gopas* and *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa sprung into action, grabbed a flower bomb, and chased after Radhika. He looked just like an angry lion whose sleep had been interrupted.

Lalita confronted Kṛṣṇa and said, “O crest-jewel of relishers! Which playful girl threw that vermilion ball on Your chest? It appears that She did not really throw a ball at You, but actually offered You Her love. Do You know Her name? Indeed, She always enchants You. But now is not a good time to become bewildered. Think it over very carefully. For nothing, You are pursuing my innocent *sakhi*.”

Lost in the bliss of Holi, Kṛṣṇa ignored Lalita and kept chasing Radha. Then Radhika smiled slightly, and cast the playful waves of Her glances at Syama-sakhi before hiding amongst Her girlfriends. Catching Syama-sakhi, Kṛṣṇa smeared colors on her hair, forehead, cheeks, and breasts.

Considering that an unfair act, Bakula-mala, Syama-sakhi's girlfriend, anxiously said, "Hey Syamasundara! That witty girl, who pelted Your chest with a flower bomb, now throws out pearls with Her flashing white smile. The radiance of Her beautiful face mocks the glowing full moon. Why did You leave Her aside to harass my innocent friend?"

After listening to Bakula-mala, Kṛṣṇa directed His attention toward Radhika instead of Syama. Eager and full of passion, Kṛṣṇa approached Radhika and said, "O proud girl! Come here and show Your strength by throwing these balls at Me!" Being overwhelmed by Radhika's presence, Kṛṣṇa smiled slightly and cast a sidelong glance as He moved closer to His beloved.

Radhika shouted a command, "O *sakhis*! Surround Him and smash Him with Your flower bombs!" With indistinct voices sounding like sweet cuckoos, the *sakhis* chanted, "*ghero! ghero!*" (surround) "*maro! maro!*" (kill). The effulgent young *gopis* almost captured Kṛṣṇa, the relisher of transcendental bliss.

The sportive son of Nanda Maharaja struck back by splashing the *gopis* with a volley of colors. The *gopis* responded with a shower of flower bombs. Aiming His jeweled *pichkari*, Kṛṣṇa completely drenched the *gopis* with streams of fragrant *kunkuma* and sandalwood scented water. Although repulsed by Kṛṣṇa's furious attack, the *gopis* regrouped and repeatedly tried to capture Him. The colored waters of Holi washed away every bit of the *gopis*' shyness. Encouraged by their increased numbers, spontaneous affection, and agitated hearts, the *gopis* surrounded their beloved just like moonbeams encircling a cloud. All the directions reverberated with the sweet love songs of Matangi and her host of Kinnaris accompanied by *vinas* and other musical instruments.

The bangles on the lotus-stem arms of the *gopis* jingled softly as they threw flower balls at the emperor of love. Bumblebees, cuckoos, and other exotic birds hummed and warbled pleasingly. The creepers danced along according to the instructions of the wind. Kṛṣṇa's intimate friends like Subala sang the *vasanta raga*. Some boys threw flower bombs and colored powders on each other. Batu, the expert joker, performed an ecstatic dance full of mirth.

Their bangles chiming sweetly like the chirping of intoxicated sparrows, the *gopis* raised their lotus-stem arms and again attacked Kṛṣṇa. This time, instead of resisting, Kṛṣṇa pretended to be too weak and tired to fight back. On the pretext of resting and catching His breath, Kṛṣṇa stopped playing for a short time. While Kṛṣṇa rested, the *gopis* stole His flute, *pichkari*, flower bow and arrows. One clever *gopi* even tried to remove Kṛṣṇa's ornaments. But Radhika stopped her with a hint of Her eyebrows because She did not want Kṛṣṇa to be humiliated in His defeat.

Then Radhika tenderly wiped the perspiration and colored powders from Kṛṣṇa's lotus face with the edge of Her *sari*. Radha deeply relished the sweetness of serving Her beloved hero after the battle. Taking *tambula* from the hand of a maidservant, Radhika put it in Kṛṣṇa's mouth. With the movements of Her eyebrows Radhika directed Syama-sakhi to gently fan Her Lord.

Seeing the *gopis* covered in colored powder, Madhumangala laughed and danced about while moving his shoulders and twisting his neck. He loudly shouted, "Hee! Hee! O Subala and my friends, we have won! Today Kṛṣṇa has broken the pride of the famous daughter of King Vrsabhanu. Now She spontaneously serves Him like a humble maidservant. What could be more amusing? Although our dear friend Kṛṣṇa is slightly exhausted from the battle of Holi, He shines gloriously with His triumph. This is certainly befitting. Alas! Alas! How could Kṛṣṇa not be victorious? With a counselor like me, success is automatically guaranteed." After saying this Batu happily raised his arms and danced about blissfully. All the *gopis* and *gopas* thoroughly enjoyed the funny antics of Batu. Overwhelmed with delight and satisfaction, Radhika kindly gave him Her own pearl necklace.

The *vanadevis* led by Vrnda and Matangi rejoiced upon seeing the sweet loving exchanges of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis*. Everyone experienced the greatest happiness by playing Holi. Concluding the festival of spring, Kṛṣṇa played His flute and walked away with His friends. They entered a shady grove to rest amidst the pleasing sound of buzzing bees. Losing their gravity, the boys submerged in an ocean of joy, as they smelled the sweet aroma of the forest flowers.

Radha, who is expert in the sixty-four arts, relished unlimited happiness during the Holi pastime. Pleased with the superb musical performance of

Matangi and her associates, Radhika gave them many valuable presents and dismissed them. Afterwards, Radhika and Her friends relaxed in a beautiful mango grove wherein Kṛṣṇa had often played. Joking and laughing, Radhika and Her intimate *sakhis* then enjoyed a sumptuous feast.

Chapter Fifteen: Lifting Govardhana Hill

Looking like the full moon surrounded by a galaxy of stars, Kṛṣṇa, the playful son of Vrajaraja Nanda, enjoyed blissful pastimes with His intimate associates. These joyous pastimes perfectly befit the enchanting atmosphere of Vrndavana. In the daytime, Kṛṣṇa tended the cows and sported with His boyfriends. Mother Earth felt honored by the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. The cowherd boys felt inconceivable bliss within their minds as they frolicked with Kṛṣṇa. During their fun-filled days, Kṛṣṇa often killed some envious demon, who acted like poison to saintly persons.

One day Nanda Maharaja, the abode of kindness, simplicity, and joy and other senior men of Vrndavana made preparations to worship the demigod Indra. They collected many articles and made elaborate arrangements for a joyous festival. Noticing this, Kṛṣṇa said to His father, "O honored one! What is the name of the ceremony you are organizing? Which demigod are you trying to please? Who is the *guru* instructing you in this *yajna* with his infallible words? What injunctions and system of worship are you following?

"Why are people running around mechanically in all directions? I do not understand the meaning of it. Of course, since I am only a boy you may not consider Me qualified to comprehend your explanation. But if you think I am eligible, then tell Me all the details of this *yajna* from beginning to end. If, however, you think it is too confidential, then still you should tell, because one should not keep secrets from well-wishers. But such details should never be revealed to one's enemies."

After speaking so maturely, Kṛṣṇa sat next to Vrajaraja Nanda on a cloth *asana*. Nanda Baba lovingly picked up His son, who was like a spotless moon moving on the earth, and placed Him on his lap. Hearing the sweet questions of his son, Nanda affectionately smiled revealing his attractive white teeth. The soft glow of his face resembled nectar drops of milk. This nectar appeared to be washing and nourishing Nanda's beard, which was mixed with white and black hair. Beaming in a jolly mood, Vrajaraja Nanda tactfully described the nature of the sacrifice.

Nanda Maharaja said, “My dear son! In our family line we have been observing this Indra *yajna* for a long time. We experience prosperity and freedom from disturbances due to its proper performance. Our only wealth is the cows that live on grass, which needs rain to grow. Rain comes from the clouds that are controlled by the demigod Indra. For all these reasons, I am making a grand festival to please Indra.

“Every year at this time we carefully observe this sacrifice. Being pleased with our *yajna*, Indra sends abundant rainfall. The other demigods gladly accept our oblations of *ghee*, and show their gratitude by preserving what we have and providing what we need. The scriptures say that human beings who honor this tradition become glorious and attain the heavenly planets in their next lives. Any man can attain peace of mind by the blessings of the demigods. Those who neglect to worship the demigods, however, cannot get any relief from their problems.”

After hearing these bitter words, Kṛṣṇa smiled mildly to hide His feelings and then refuted Nanda’s presentation. Kṛṣṇa’s eloquent delivery amazed and pleased the Vrajavasis. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa mesmerized the entire audience with His words.

Kṛṣṇa said, “In this regard your actions are not justified. The force of *karma* causes the birth, maintenance, and destruction of all living entities. It is not the demigods, but it is a person’s work that determines his destiny. A saintly person, therefore, need not worship any demigod. One may beg so many desirable things from the demigods. But the demigods cannot give one more than what he is destined by his own pious and impious acts. Only those who cannot control their senses propound that demigods can award more than what one has worked to attain.

“You can say that living entities are inspired to act by the Supersoul. But this is also false, because every individual is under the control of his own conditioned nature. In reality, it is the acquired desires and personal nature of a living entity that cause him to act. Where is the question of the Supersoul being the supreme controller? Even the Lord Himself does not directly perform the activities of creation, maintenance, and destruction. All these actions are conducted by the three modes of material nature, namely goodness, passion, and ignorance.

“It is not a fact that wherever it rains, the cause is worshiping and pleasing Indra, who in turn sends the rain clouds. There is constant rain during the monsoon season. But you cannot say that Indra sends it. Indeed, the monsoon rains bring mental distress and make people weak and thin. So that rain is not the mercy of someone who is pleased.

“Do the seas and mountains worship Indra? Of course not, but still they are full of water. Why does Indra give them so much water? Impelled by the material mode of passion, the clouds pour rain everywhere, and this rain sustains all creatures. Therefore, nothing will happen if you do not worship Indra.

“The *brahmana* maintains his life by studying and teaching the *Vedas*, the *ksatriya* by protecting the earth and political activity, the *vaisya* by trade and agriculture, and the *sudra* by serving the other classes. The occupational duties of the *vaisya* are conceived of in four divisions: farming, commerce, cow protection, and money lending. Of these, our duty is cow protection.

“Neither in the past nor the present has there been any certainty about having a successful grain harvest in our village. Therefore, this *yajna* means nothing to us. It is our nature to dwell in the forest and wander in the woods and on the hills. Since we never stay in one place, why should we perform the Indra *yajna*, which is not based on scriptural injunctions?

“O father! You are peaceful and respected by everyone. You should have faith in My words, for they will remove all danger. Now just expertly worship Govardhana Hill with all the ingredients collected for the Indra *yajna*. This great mountain is not only named Govardhana, but it has the ability to increase (*vardhana*) the health and satisfaction of our cows (*go*).

“Collect pots full of milk and make first-class milk sweets like sweet rice. Cook many tasty foods and fancy cakes. Bring leaf bowls full of *ghee*, honey, and nectar drinks. Prepare an ocean of yogurt, buttermilk, and fresh butter. Build a mountain of rock candy, and cover all directions with an abundance of *shikharini rasala*.

“Send messengers to invite the *brahmanas*. Feed them sumptuously until they laugh, and their faces beam with the brilliant garlands of their blissful smiles. At that moment, the *brahmanas* will consider that the heavenly

storehouses of nectar are totally insignificant. Call the priests to conduct the fire sacrifice and distribute cows in charity to the *brahmanas*. Those among you who are simple-hearted should just try to feed the *brahmanas*.

“You should please everyone by making an *annakuta* (hill of food) with thick *dals*, varieties of aromatic vegetables, and very palatable sweet cakes surrounded by pools of unlimited sweet rice. Then worship Gira-Govardhana with the proper articles such as *padya*. After feeding the *brahmanas*, you should give food to everyone else, including such fallen souls as dogs and dog-eaters. Saturate the directions with the sweet music of *bheris*, resonant conches, tumultuous kettledrums, and various other instruments. The witty, well versed *brahmanas* will start the *yajna* with perfectly pronounced *mangalacarana mantras*. The entire horizon will be surcharged with all these auspicious sounds.

“According to *sastric* injunction, you should circumambulate Giriraja to conclude the worship. Decorated with priceless jingling ornaments that delight the ears, the men should dress so luxuriously that even the demigods would be astonished. The housewives with their sweet, gentle smiles should also assemble. Invite the male and female artists to dance and sing along with flutes, *vinas* and *mrdangas*. Bring the bullock carts in a procession lead by scholarly *brahmanas*, who are truly the personified jewels of all auspiciousness.

“You, who has the audacity to challenge even Lord Indra, who lives for milleniums, should happily circumambulate Govardhana Hill along with your cows, bulls and calves. Do not think, ‘How can we have faith that Giriraja will gratify our desires?’ Soon Giriraja will fulfill all your desires and become famous as a second Mahendra. He will reward you handsomely and make all your endeavors fruitful. What more can I say? O father! If you want to, you can follow My advice and achieve an auspicious result.”

After hearing Kṛṣṇa’s speech, Nanda Maharaja and the leading men of Vrndavana accepted His proposal. They agreed that this must be done to satisfy their desires. Acting as the *acarya* of the *yajna*, Kṛṣṇa directed the Vrajavasis to worship Giriraja with all the paraphernalia collected for Indra’s worship. This of course made Indra extremely angry.

Nothing else could be heard in Vrndavana except the auspicious vibration of instrumental music. Vedic hymns resounded through the sky. The Vrajavasis felt blissful, and all the living entities entered a jolly mood from the worship of Govardhana.

Hearing the melodious voices of the ladies, the cuckoos anxiously tried to learn singing from them. Ears attained their purpose by perceiving those auspicious sounds. The cows were adorned with gold-plated horns, colorful silk cloths on their backs, pearl necklaces, and tinkling bells hanging from their necks. Seeing their mothers so richly ornamented, the calves jumped excitedly.

Nanda Maharaja brought the necessary articles from his house to worship Govardhana Hill. He initiated the *puja* by respectfully offering *padya* (water) to wash Giriraja's feet. In an ebullient mood, he made the Annakuta hill complete with powerful peaks that delighted all in attendance. The peak rising out of the middle of the hill looked like a crown made of white camphor. The multi-colored cakes stuck on the sides of the Annakuta hill looked like stones and boulders. At the base of the hill there were clay pots full of milk, yogurt, and sweet rice. There were also colorful *sabjis*, lakes of *dahl*, and very fragrant soups.

Due to its covering of *ghee*, the Annakuta Mountain looked like golden Mt. Kailasa shimmering under a cover of rain. Different kinds of fruits and flowers decorated its edges. When Nanda Maharaja saw the opulence of Annakuta spreading its sweet aroma of cloves, camphor, and cardamom in all directions, he felt that this was fitting honor to Sri Giriraja, the king of all mountains.

Sri Hari smiled happily upon seeing the amazing Annakuta rivaling the peak of Mt. Sumeru. Suddenly, the playful, fun-loving, indomitable Kṛṣṇa assumed a huge unprecedented form and stood on top of Govardhana Hill. He did this to anger Indra and instill faith in the cowherd men.

Observing this powerful form glowing like a thousand suns, Kṛṣṇa, who remained among the cowherd men in His original human-like form, cast a gentle glance upon everyone and said, "*Hung ho!* Look! Look! By using all the paraphernalia to exclusively worship Govardhana Hill with pure love you have received his favor. Govardhana, the best of all mountains, has now

manifested before you as a brilliantly effulgent person. Please look closely! The huge mouth of this expanded form of Giriraja resembles a deep cave. Though his mouth is massive, his face looks as beautiful as the full moon. Usually trees serve as his arms, but now he has two beautiful arms adorned with attractive jeweled armlets. Usually hard rocks cover his body, but now he has assumed a tender sweet form. Look how that beautiful body walks over the other non-moving form!

“Moreover, this non-moving form is sitting like a seat made of costly emeralds, but it appears like the huge chest of the moving one. Glittering like a row of rubies, his teeth look like the crown of the non-moving form. The saffron hue of the minerals on the non-moving form gives an attractive hue to the lips of the moving one. In comparison, these two forms of Govardhana manifest the same elegance. Govardhana is reciprocating with your overflowing love and devotion. He is acting like a hungry person extending his arms bedecked with jeweled bangles. Look! Just see how this hill has appeared in person to fulfill your desires! Now offer respects to him.”

Both Kṛṣṇa and the people of Vṛndavana bowed down to this personified form of Govardhana Hill. In effect, Kṛṣṇa actually offered obeisances to Himself. When the cowherd men, their wives, and the leading men of Vṛndavana saw that form shining like the sun, they raised their folded hands above their heads and said, “*Namo! Namō! Namō!*” Being overwhelmed in affection, they danced around ecstatically. By joyfully worshiping Govardhana Hill, the Vrajavasis realized that Govardhana is a person.

Music from the temples wherein different demigods were being worshiped resounded in all directions. From all sides intoxicated dancers performed blissfully. The heavenly Kinnaras joined in with euphoric dancing. Relishing the music and singing, the Vrajavasis forgot themselves in that joyous Govardhana festival.

Govardhana caused the entire atmosphere to abound in happiness. Govardhana Hill affectionately accepted the faithful worship of Nanda Maharaja by manifesting a personal form. Anyone who simply hears and chants about the glories of Giri-Govardhana, which are inconceivable to ordinary people, will be delivered from all calamities.

Vrajaraja Nanda, the father of the subduer of demons, concluded the propitious worship of Giriraja by sumptuously feeding the *brahmanas*, and everyone else down to the dogs. He handsomely rewarded the singers and dancers. Everyone attending the festival received precious gems and divinely opulent garments. Their hearts full of joy, the Vrajavasis talked excitedly among themselves as they did *parikrama* of Govardhana Hill.

Skilled musicians led the way playing the finest instrumental music. The languid muffled tones of *bheris*, *dhakas* and kettledrums softened the atmosphere with their pleasing vibrations. With their bodies decorated with designs drawn in *kunkuma*, the cowherd boys followed behind the musicians. Wielding sticks, they fearlessly drove the multi-colored cows ornamented with gold and jewels.

A second group of talented musicians came along playing flutes and *vinas*. Next came singers with sweet gentle voices, and ecstatic dancers moving in rows one behind the other. Then the *gopis*, their faces glowing with happiness, came riding on bullock carts that rivaled the golden chariots of the gods. They sang loudly about their intimate pastimes with Kṛṣṇa.

Hari, who removes all obstacles, laughed and joked with His cowherd boyfriends as He circumambulated Govardhana Hill. Eternally bound to Him in faith, Kṛṣṇa's friends remained fearless and free from all anxieties. Wearing a sweet-smelling flower garland across his broad chest, Nanda Maharaja walked just behind the boys. He was smiling in great satisfaction and accompanied by the leading men of Vrndavana.

In accordance to scriptural injunctions, they gave charity to *brahmanas* at different places while going around Giriraja. It is impossible to find a suitable container to hold the unlimited bliss that the Vrajavasis felt during their *parikrama* of Giriraja. Even though tiny in size, the soul can enjoy immeasurable happiness. As a result, their souls drowned in inconceivable joy. The continuous music of the *dhakas* and kettledrums, which are famous on heaven and earth, increased the bliss of the *parikrama*.

Soon they arrived on the banks of the Yamuna (which previously flowed near Govardhana). Being the glorious day of *bhratridvitiya tithi*, which is very dear to both Yamuna and her brother Yamaraja, they decided to take an auspicious bath. *Bhratridvitiya tithi* is the day when sisters pray for the

prosperity of their brothers. Sunanda, the intelligent, well-behaved daughter of Upananda, invited her cousin-brother Damodara (Kṛṣṇa), who is always jubilant and victorious, to celebrate the festival.

Damodara, who delights all moving and non-moving creatures, gladly accepted the sincere request of Sunanda. His heart overflowed with loving feelings for that dear sister. She affectionately served many types of delicious drinks and tasty cakes to Kṛṣṇa and His friends. Haladhara and all the boys enjoyed the excellent food while Batu, the skillful jester, entertained the enchanter of the world with his funny jokes and antics.

Batu quipped, “Alas! Alas! O dear friend, killer of the Agha demon! Why didn’t the foolish creator make every *tithi* as *bhratridvitiya tithi*? O brother, whose chest shines with the mark of Srivatsa, we count the year in terms of days. So how come You do not have many sisters like Sunanda, who acting as the embodiments of kindness, will fill us up like this every day of the year? If this had happened, it would have been a great source of pleasure for us. Yesterday’s exciting Govardhana festival has passed. Though heaps of food and drink were offered, and although I am a voracious eater, still I did not enjoy as much as I have today on *bratridvitiya*.”

Kṛṣṇa, who steals everyone’s heart with His charming character, enjoyed the simple joking words of Batu as He joyfully ate. Then in mutual affection, Damodara and Sunanda exchanged so much valuable cloth, jewels, and golden ornaments that it astonished the people on earth. Thus, the *bratridvitiya* celebration ended.

Meanwhile, the demigod Indra developed a headache due to being ignored and forgotten by the Vrajavasis. We will now describe how he tried to get relief and revenge by employing excessive rains. While sitting among the demigods, Indra felt sad and distressed seeing that his sacrifice had been cancelled.

Burning with rage, Indra said, “Just see how surprising it is! The intelligence of these cowherd men is just like the animals they tend. They stopped my *puja* just by hearing a few words from a mere child. Even though many goddesses of learning praise me, those offensive cowherd men did not think twice about giving up my worship. Have they been overtaken by false pride?

“O virtuous cowherd men! Now you act deviously without any fear of anyone. Well, I will see how long it lasts. This foolish, arrogant, and talkative child has offended me. Even though you claim He satisfies your desires and gives you long prosperous lives, we will soon see if He is really your ever well-wisher.”

Overcome by revenge and frustration, Indra considered for a moment how to retaliate against the Vrajavasis. Angry Indra then released the powerful clouds of universal destruction known as Samvartaka. Coming before their master, the clouds submitted, “We are your servants and always ready to execute your order.” To encourage His servants, Indra glanced at them with affection and appreciation as he addressed them.

“*Hung ho!* O my playful speedy clouds, who are famous throughout the world for distributing profuse rain. Your pride in your power fills me with strength. Now make me successful by carrying out my orders. You have the unadulterated mood of destroying the whole creation within you. But this assignment involves only one small region. Go shake the earth with your thunder and destroy the village of Vrndavana with a deluge!”

Being released from the task of devastating the universe at a particular time, Samvartaka and other servants of Indra proudly stepped forward to accomplish their mission. First a vast bank of clouds, appearing like a huge patch of moss in the sky, blocked out the sun and covered Vrndavana in total darkness. Extending from Rasatala to Svargaloka, the cloud covering looked like the smoky breath exhaled by the Naga snakes.

Released from their bonds, a few ominous clouds, in the sportive mood of breaking the Kedara Mountain, quickly spread across the sky. These dense dark clouds appeared as massive as the celestial elephants guarding the quarters of the globe. Another group of dangerous clouds circled overhead. The clouds, like Mt. Mainaka, the son of the Himalayas, continually expanded and flew freely in the sky without any fear of being cut by Indra’s millions of thunderbolts.

One fantastically large cloudbank appeared like a second Loka-loka mountain range. The hard peaks of those clouds continued to grow higher and higher while simultaneously expanding in all directions. When the clouds collected they covered all the planetary systems in darkness. Even

the sharpest axe could not cut through the dense network of clouds that assembled over Vrndavana.

The three worlds appeared to be born out of the darkness created by that ever-expanding cloudbank. The covering of the universe turned as black as the soot smeared on the bottom of a pot. However, the universal disturbances and the attack of the devastating Samvartaka clouds had practically no effect on Vrndavana, which continually bathes in the moonlight emanating from Kṛṣṇa's jewel-like toenails.

After earth, water, fire, air, and so on there is a tenth element known as *andha tamasah* (blinding darkness). Everything animate and inert in the ten directions appears stupefied by this element. It seemed that no one in the world could see anything. Water dripped from the dome-like covering of the universe. The water drops moved so fast that they formed a continuous stream of water speeding through the universe like a raging river breaking over its dam. Such a thing will never happen again. That torrential downpour seemed like the long hanging branches of the *banyan* tree of the sky.

The cows sheltered their calves under the blankets of loose skin on their necks. In fear of the slashing rainwater, the cows kept their eyes almost closed and their tails hanging straight down. As they shivered uncontrollably from the violent rains, the skin on their backs swelled up. While standing in this painful condition they looked toward Kṛṣṇa for shelter.

When the rain hit the horns of the bulls it bounced off and landed on their thick fatty humps. Breaking into small pearl-like drops, it then rolled down their broad muscular backs. Alas! Alas! The fierce rainfall angered and tormented the bulls. Observing the torrents of rain, which fell in columns as thick as the trunks of full-grown banana trees, the cowherd men of Vrndavana thought that the devastation had suddenly arrived. Terrified and weakened, they approached Kṛṣṇa, who makes everyone happy.

Full of pain and agony, they said, "O Kṛṣṇa! You always save us and give us happiness. Now we are in great danger! Since You are the Lord of Gokula, You should immediately protect us. Look! Look! The flashing lightning bolt appears like the forked tongue of an angry snake. The

pounding hailstones are pulverizing the life out of the trees. The lightning bolts entering the water seem like the brilliant fire emitted by mythical hydras.

“The clouds roar ferociously as they release torrents of rain as thick as massive columns. The vast sheets of water are increasing in volume like the ocean of devastation. The earth is quickly submerging in the flood, and we cannot distinguish the high ground from the low. Just look around and see for Yourself. The *surabhi* cows use their own bodies to protect their calves from the pelting hailstones. With their tear-filled eyes they are speaking to You, ‘O Kṛṣṇa! Once You saved us from the devastating forest fire, so please save us from this terrible rainfall.’

“Look at the condition of the bulls! Upon hitting their humps, the heavy hailstones are being ground into pieces and scattering on the ground like pearls. Their eyes reddened in rage, the bulls raise their heads to look angrily at the clouds. Their faces and bodies are completely drenched in water. Aha! How much they are suffering! This devastation seems like the personification of a big *anartha* which we cannot remove. Only You can deliver us, therefore, we surrender unto You. We are Your loving kinsmen, so please save us!”

After hearing their anxious pleas and seeing the distress of His cows, Kṛṣṇa, whose blossoming lotus eyes are beautiful to behold, considered, “This must be the work of angry Indra.” In a compassionate voice sweeter than honey, Kṛṣṇa consoled His family and friends, “Do not be afraid! Actually this trouble is as significant as a hunger pain is to one who has just consumed a sumptuous feast. Anyone practicing devotional service can easily remove all *anarthas*. The Kinnaras and the demigods glorify this fact. For your benefit, I will now enact a special pastime to destroy Indra’s mountain of pride.”

As the relisher of nectarean *rasas*, Kṛṣṇa has a beautiful body, which is as sweet as the honey in a flower. Without even tightening His cloth He showed complete indifference to the mighty wrath of foolish Indra. Instantly, Kṛṣṇa picked up Govardhana Hill with one hand and held it aloft with no more effort than a child takes to hold a mushroom or an elephant uses to lift a clump of grass.

Many loud sounds echoed in all directions when the mountain rose into the air. The echoes sounded like a bunch of rowdy children yelling within its many caves. The lifting of Govardhana Hill produced an angry loud noise that crushed the pride of the elephants guarding the eight directions. That furious sound roamed around and around within the covering of the universe. The sound had enough intelligence to win a wager on whether it could break the long meditation of Brahma on Brahmaloka. That sound dared to interrupt the uproarious *madhvika* wine drinking festival of the old ladies on Patalaloka.

The flowers falling from the trees appeared to be the form of Giriraja's ecstatic laughter due to being touched by Kṛṣṇa's lotus hand. Those falling flowers seemed to be Giriraja's celebrating the destruction of Indra's fame. Growing higher and higher, the sharp peaks of Giriraja cut the ominous cloud cover to pieces. The row of trees along the peaks of Giriraja challenged the trees in Indra's celestial forest. The lions living on top of Govardhana Hill mistook the hovering clouds for elephants. Using their powerful sharp claws, they ripped apart that cluster of elephant clouds. In fear, the clouds ran hither and thither.

Seeing Kṛṣṇa holding Giriraja aloft with His left hand, Mt. Kailasa shivered in fright while thinking, "Hey look! Who is this covering the sky? How could this happen?" Mt. Sumeru panicked. Overwhelmed by fear, the elephants of the directions jumped in the Manasi Ganga. Giriraja served Gokula as a jewel-bedecked umbrella that could not be moved by the fierce winds or pierced by the razor-sharp lightning bolts of Indra. Balanced on the beautiful emerald pole of Kṛṣṇa's raised arm, Giriraja cast a pleasing radiance upon everyone. The glimmering rain shower coming down on all sides seemed like streams of dripping pearls.

While holding Giriraja in one hand, Kṛṣṇa, whose wonderful behavior illuminates the world, spoke convincingly to the cowherd community, "Mago! (O mother) Do not be in anxiety. Father! Do not worry. O friends! Do not doubt My ability. Giriraja will not fall from My hand. You directly saw how he personally accepted our worship. Is it then difficult for him to remain suspended in the sky? Although Giriraja appears to be a huge immovable mountain, he is transcendently situated beyond the doubts and comprehension of this material world. Look how light he is. Even a child

like Me can easily pick him up. O! Just see! Giriraja is completely independent and moving according to his own sweet will. In this matter, I am but an instrument.

“Therefore you should collect all your property and come under the mountain. There is no difference between the village of Vrndavana and this valley below Giriraja. Be happy and stay here peacefully. At the end of the *kalpa* everyone in creation gives up their gross bodies, and lives within the abdomen of Narayana in their subtle bodies. Staying there, however, you could not enjoy as much fun as you can by living here within the belly of Giriraja.

“When I lifted the hill, huge chunks of earth fell off the bottom, and formed a natural boundary wall around the perimeter of Giriraja. This wall will keep out the torrential rains. Forget about your pleasure gardens and your attachments to your former residences. Let this place become the source of joyful pastimes for the cows, *gopas*, and *gopis*.”

The string of Govardhana-dhari’s reassuring words resembled an elegant necklace made from the nectar of His voice. Immediately, the elderly *gopas* felt completely pacified by Kṛṣṇa’s sweet words. Taking their wealth, sons, wives, cows, and priests, who felt immeasurable happiness and beamed with matchless beauty, they entered the splendid valley beneath Girit Govardhana. Taking shelter there, they all filled with surprise and smiled with delight.

They clearly saw that the valley beneath Govardhana, which dazzled attractively in the light, could easily accommodate all their innumerable cows, animals, and family members. The valley brimmed with gratifying sense objects to see, touch, taste, and so on. That divine place was the very ornament of the earth. Its purity and opulence exceeded the wealth of the subterranean heavenly planets like Sutala. Fields of rich green barley spread in all directions, and many lakes full of crystal clear water stood here and there.

The cows stayed near the border of the improvised town and pastured on fields full of fresh green grass. The Vrajavasis stood around peacefully in different groups. Some cowherd men mixed with the *brahmanas*, and the elderly married ladies stayed with their daughters. Radhika and other

prominent young married *gopis* gathered beside them. Kṛṣṇa's intimate friends like Batu remained by His side, and Nanda, Yasoda, and Balarama stood slightly in front of Him.

Thus the venerable Vrajavasis relished great joy associating intimately with Kṛṣṇa. They no longer felt any fear or discomfort from Indra's deluge, which threatened to destroy the whole world. The rain falling from the roaring clouds sounded like water pouring from the mouths of many large water pots.

Although situated in different directions, all the Vrajavasis gazed to their hearts' content at the gorgeous lotus face of Giridhari, the lifter of Govardhana Hill. Each devotee saw that Kṛṣṇa was looking directly at him. Feeling relieved, the illustrious *brahmanas* offered abundant blessings to the blissful younger brother of Balarama. Kṛṣṇa descended on earth to perform His transcendental pastimes and to crush the pride of the demons and the demigods.

While holding up Govardhana Hill, Kṛṣṇa was surrounded by all His loving associates. Taking advantage of the intimate setting, they gazed at Kṛṣṇa with joyful faces, prayed for His victory, or affectionately smelled His head. Being saturated with parental affection, Mother Rohini firmly embraced her son Balarama, who always gives immense pleasure to His parents.

Both the submissive *gopis* and the contrary ones like Radhika smiled blissfully while looking at Kṛṣṇa with love-laden glances. The *gopis* always play with Kṛṣṇa and enjoy love sports in the forests of Vrndavana. While gazing upon Him, they looked like thirsty *cakori* birds continually drinking the ambrosial radiance of His moon-like face. With unblinking eyes they took Kṛṣṇa within their hearts and lovingly embraced Him. During the festival of lifting Govardhana Hill everyone tasted the greatest ecstasy.

To lighten the heart of his beloved friend Kṛṣṇa, Batu said, "O dearest friend of the whole world! Please listen to my words. By my *brahman tejas* (spiritual potency) I will fill You with happiness. When I am here as Your friend, why are You troubling Yourself by lifting Giriraja? O lotus-eyed one! Just order me and I will hold up this great mountain on the tip of my golden stick. You must be exhausted from holding the hill. So now relax and take some rest while I hold the hill."

Vrajesvari Yasoda then addressed her son, “O my darling child! You always act impudently due to the force of Your uncontrolled senses. For years, we peacefully observed the Indra *yajna*, but then You abruptly stopped it. Disregarding the demigods never brings auspiciousness. How can one find fortune if he shows enmity toward the demons or the demigods? In the presence of these two fears how can we enjoy living here?”

Although Kṛṣṇa’s body is inexhaustible and ever blissful, Yasoda thought that He had overworked Himself. Considering that, she expressed her motherly affection by reaching up to lovingly touch His lotus hand that held the hill. While doing this she said, “Aho! How can Your hand, which is as pure and soft as fresh butter, bear the heavy weight of this mountain without any other help or support? *Hung ho!* O Giriraja, please be compassionate and give me a boon! If you are actually some worshipable god, then do something to become soft and lightweight so that Kṛṣṇa will not feel any distress. O honorable one! All my son’s actions are in accordance with the instructions of *sastras* and saintly persons.”

Batu said, “Mother! Do not speak like this! How can you say Kṛṣṇa is in distress? Listen, what good has that angry Indra done for us? He brutally attacked us with his dense dark clouds and fierce lightning bolts. Now just appreciate the dazzling sweetness that Kṛṣṇa has manifested in His pastime of lifting Giri-Govardhana. Had Indra not become angry, then we would not have had the chance to relish this nectar through our eyes.”

Mother Yasoda replied to Batu, “O bold one! Holding a heavy load over the head can never be a show of sweetness. Lifting the enormous weight of Giriraja will cause one to become distressed and disabled. Just see! The locks of curly hair on Kṛṣṇa’s forehead are wet from perspiration. His face has dried out and become pale like a lotus wilted by the snow. His hands and feet have a ruddy color. How can a mother’s heart, ‘*O Siva! Siva!*’ tolerate seeing such hardship?”

Kṛṣṇa said, “Mother! There cannot be anything more fun than this. Why are you worried about Me for nothing? Just see, the great mount of Govardhana is floating on his own in the open sky. I told you before that this body of Mine is but an instrument of his will.”

Yasoda replied, “My dear son! That may be true. But how can You not be tired after standing here for so long, and holding that mountain with Your raised arm? O intelligent one! I will believe what You said if Govardhana gives up the joyful association of Your lotus hand, and then flies around the sky playing on his own.”

Batu said, “O Queen of Vrndavana! Don’t you know that this great mountain is sitting on the lotus hand of Kṛṣṇa by the strength of my *mantras* and special powers? Therefore my friend is not feeling any pain from holding Giriraja. This is natural because everyone is favorably disposed toward the Lord of their hearts.”

Yasoda said, “O impudent one! What kind of nonsense are you speaking? I am burning in anxiety over my son. His tendency is to act independently without caring for any good instructions. And now you come here, make jokes, and laugh about it.”

Nanda Maharaja interjected, “Why are you scolding Batu? In this world, a person who is expert in diplomacy will use very affectionate words to encourage one in such a trying situation. So understanding the need of the time, Batu spoke appropriately. Besides that, our dear son very much appreciates the words of Batu.”

Meanwhile, the rest of the Vrajavasis stood around Giridhari admiring the sweetness of His gorgeous transcendental form. Due to their affection for Kṛṣṇa, the sinless Vrajavasis transgressed ordinary etiquette, and talked loudly among themselves about His extraordinary beauty.

One Vrajavasi said, “Up to this time, we have never really appreciated how Kṛṣṇa’s elegant body is the very ornament of the entire earth. Look! Look! As Kṛṣṇa displays His attractive three-fold bending form, His left side stretches up broad and straight, without showing the three lines on His belly. His right heel is raised, and His left foot appears to be kissing the earth. His well-shaped left knee is slightly contracted, and His waist is gently curved. His garland and *uttariya* (thin *caddar*) are swinging to the left side. It is very pleasant to see His arm pit as He effortlessly holds His strong left arm aloft.

“His right thumb is tucked into the refulgent red cloth wrapped around His handsome hips, which are enriched with the three beautiful lines of His

belly. Just see how the beauty of Kṛṣṇa's right side decorates the earth. In a merry mood, Kṛṣṇa glances lovingly at us as His eyes roam here and there. The pollen from the dew-covered blue lotuses tucked over His ears reflects exquisitely on His shining cheeks. Even though He must be tired from lifting Giriraja, Kṛṣṇa is delighting our minds with the nectar of His gentle smile. Today His beautiful face is more dazzling than anything."

A second Vrajavasi said, "O look! Look! It is a great mystery that since Kṛṣṇa has not moved for a long time, His ankle-bells, which crush all false pride, solve all problems, and deliver one from all dangers, have now become silent just like a dumb person. Although they are awake, those ankle-bells seem just like a pair of swans sleeping in front of a blue lotus flower. Just see! The ankle-bells are absorbed in silent meditation just like a self-realized soul. But when Kṛṣṇa lifted Giriraja their meditation broke and they moved slightly. The demigods praised that pleasant jingling sound and came to serve it. Seeing that, the ankle-bells again fell silent, feeling apprehensive about their sudden movement."

Someone else said, "O look at Kṛṣṇa! While holding Giriraja nonchalantly in one hand, He holds His pastime flute in His other hand. Pressing it gently to His lips, He plays soft sweet tunes that fill us with exhilaration."

Noticing this, Batu said with alarm, "O my friend! Do not be so daring! Do not play Your flute. How will You protect Your friends today if Giriraja becomes ecstatic from hearing the sweet melodies of Your flute and falls off Your hand? Your flute has the power to destroy everything. Simply hearing it, mountains melt into rivers and rivers turn into stone. Aho! Look! It can do many incredible things."

The cowherd boys said, "O Kusumasava! May this mountain maintain His patience and keep protecting us from the calamitous inundation. If Giriraja melts into a river, he himself will become the very source of our destruction. But that will not happen. A person with great patience may sometimes thrill with ecstasy, but he quickly recovers his composure. There is not the slightest fear that Giriraja may change his position. Just relish the honey nectar of Kṛṣṇa's flute and give up your restlessness."

Another person said, "Look! Just see the foolishness of Indra! Even though He is supposed to be a well-wisher of all, he has shown anger to such an

innocent person. Within his heart he has enmity against Kṛṣṇa. O lifter of Giriraja! Indra tries to destroy our dynasty with his lightning bolts, whereas Kṛṣṇa always does well for the world. Indra merely guards the eastern direction, whereas Kṛṣṇa protects all the directions. Why has Hari (a second name for Indra) become so shameless by assuming the same name as our Lord Hari?”

Someone else said, “How astounding! Before us we see the deliverer from the inundation, the clouds causing the inundation, difficult times due to the inundation, and the very ocean of inundation! Are we being bewildered by some illusion? Or has someone cast a magic spell over us? Although we are in such a dangerous condition, still we have not been defeated.”

One person said, “Though we are in the middle of a terrible devastation, we are delighting in a conversation full of joking and laughter. While relishing these nectarean talks we do not feel any anxiety or disturbance.”

One Vrajavasi said, “O Radhika, Your face is superbly beautiful. Do not make Your eyebrows dance while Kṛṣṇa is holding up Govardhana. For that will severely agitate His mind. Then His arm will start shaking violently and cause the mountain to immediately fall off His hand. Please do not cause such a perilous situation.”

Radhika joked with Syamala-sakhi, a witty, sweet speaker expert in making people laugh. Glancing shyly from the corner of Her eyes, Radharani said, “Hey doe-eyed Syame! Do not infuse your ecstasy in My heart. Calm down and control your mind.”

One *gopi* said, “Kṛṣṇa, who turned the king of mountains into a play ball, must have tremendous patience. His clever behavior is beyond compare.”

Another *gopi* replied, “Alas! Alas! Your words are drawing exactly the opposite conclusion to my intentions. So now listen to your praises. O enchanting one! I will accept that the holder of Giriraja has great patience if He can keep His patience after seeing the splendid beauty of your full breasts.”

A third *sakhi* said, “O *sakhi*, stop joking! Kṛṣṇa’s greatness is His ability to satisfy everyone with His unique sweetness. He is especially pleasing when He teases wanton ladies like us.”

One *sakhi* said, “Just see how Kṛṣṇa holds up the mountain with His left hand while softly playing the flute with His right hand. He casts loving sidelong glances on everyone and shakes His head pleasantly while listening to His friends.”

Then one dear *sakhi* told Radhika, “Listen carefully to my words. While all the Vrajavasis relish the pastime of constantly looking at Kṛṣṇa, He is absorbed in glancing at You alone. Just see how His body has erupted with ecstatic symptoms such as tears, trembling, and thrill bumps. But the other Vrajavasis think these transformations are due to His lifting Giriraja.”

One *sakhi* said, “Yes! What you said is absolutely true. Please take this pearl necklace as a reward for your realization.”

While admiring the infinite loveliness of Radhika, Kṛṣṇa enveloped in bliss, trembled, and perspired profusely. Observing these ecstatic changes, one *gopi* pointed to the cowherd men and told her girlfriend. “Hey look! The *gopas* think that Giridhari is feeling tired. In a mood of compassion, they have raised their sticks above their heads to help Him hold up the hill.”

Seeing the prominent cowherd men endeavoring to hold up Giriraja, Radhika, whose face outshines the moon, covered Her head with Her veil and looked shyly at the ground. Then, unseen by Her *sakhis*, Radhika beamed a sweet, gentle smile to bathe Kṛṣṇa in a shower of nectar.

While looking at the cowherd men Batu said, “O residents of Vṛndavana! Do not be afraid! You are just scratching the body of Giriraja with your sticks. But do not think that you are holding up the hill. Kṛṣṇa is not the least bit tired. Besides, He is the brother of Balarama who is famous for His unlimited strength. The pure and potent body of Kṛṣṇa emits a dazzling radiance. Only a sudden calamity could reduce that effulgence. O my friend Kṛṣṇa! Observing the trembling of Your body, I can understand that the beautiful face of that famous *sakhi* Radhika has put You into great distress.”

The prince of Vṛndavana is the abode of unfathomable attributes. His face is as fresh as a blue lotus flower bathed in the soft moonlight. When He smiles attractively His beautiful teeth sparkle like a thousand rays of light. A radiant pearl necklace adorns His chest. Kṛṣṇa reveals the ecstasy in His heart by gently moving His reddish lips.

After listening to the playful words of Batu, Kṛṣṇa responded sweetly to the delight of His intimate friends. He said, “The cowherd men have a very favorable attitude toward Me, therefore, I always fulfill their desires. Why are you laughing at them? The Vrajavasis do not know the inconceivable power of My body. Nor do they know that the famous Radhika is actually one of My matchless forms. Radha’s body is non-different from Mine and She is My favorite lover. The *gopas*’ attempt to hold up Giriraja simply proclaims their parental love for Me. Indeed, their action is quite befitting! What could be more pleasurable than this.”

Then Kṛṣṇa spoke to the *gopas*, “*Ho! Ho! O gopas!* You are famous for reposing all your love in Me. So why do you behave like this? Even though the great Mahadeva, the father of Ganesa, respects you, you are acting like common men. Give up this wearisome endeavor. Just look at Me! You can plainly see that I am not the least bit tired.”

Just like a cow hankering to see her calf, Yasoda stepped forward and spoke affectionately to her son, “O beloved one! The day has moved along, and You appear afflicted and lackluster from not eating. Your belly has caved in and Your jeweled belt has slipped off. Seeing that Your lotus face has withered from fasting, the cows refuse to eat anything or move an inch from here, even though nearby there are fields rich with grains.

“Therefore, I appeal to You because You are very compassionate. Please stop playing artistically on Your flute, and drop Your arm so I can feed You with my hand. One whose actions are exemplary will adjust his behavior according to the conditions. I have brought You some warm soft cakes and tasty creamy yogurt with thick skin on top. Now take these delicious items along with Rama and Your friends.”

Batu said, “O my dear friend! Your mother spoke correctly. You should never go against her. Moreover, I am also upset by hunger.”

Kṛṣṇa, the crest-jewel of relishers, said, “O Mother! I do not feel like a single moment has passed. Yet why do others think this short time to be so long? But since one should not disobey his superiors, I think it is proper for Me to gladly eat from your hand.”

Meanwhile, holding a brilliant, flashing lightning bolt in his hand, Indra sped through the sky on his elephant carrier. Though sitting on his elephant

carrier, Airavata, Indra actually rode upon the chariot of his anger. Showing his unflinching affection toward the rain clouds, Indra cracked the sky and made everyone cry with a tumultuous thundering sound.

Hissing like an angry snake, Indra raced to Vrndavana to survey the situation. Since he had already sent the Samvartaka clouds a few days before, he assumed Vrndavana must now be totally demolished. Astonishment seized Indra's mind upon seeing the dense peaks of Govardhana piercing the huge Samvartaka clouds and soaring above them. The deer, birds, and other living entities of Vrndavana wandered about happily, unaffected by Indra's torrents of rain. Clusters of white clouds completely covered the base of Govardhana. These clouds enhanced the beauty of Giriraja as they washed the mountain with the rains of devastation. Giriraja looked like a huge umbrella, and the clouds seemed like a decorative fringe of pearls ornamenting that umbrella.

While observing this, Indra, thinking himself the supreme controller, decided to exhibit the limit of his anger. Cruel hearted Indra disrespected both the cows and the Lord. In order to destroy the land of cows, he instigated the clouds of devastation to thunder menacingly and pour incessant rain on Vrndavana. Out of fear, the clouds dutifully followed the directions of Indra. With the mood of a determined fighter, the furious storm tried to blow away Giriraja with severely high winds.

Sri Hari, His effulgent jewel-like body washed by the moonlight of His smile, instantly removed whatever hardship Giriraja felt from the lightning bolts, heavy hailstones, profuse rains, and high piercing winds. By seeing Kṛṣṇa's effulgence and feeling the sweet breath from His lustrous lotus face, Giriraja felt totally relieved while relishing the exciting adventures of the Lord.

Outside the shelter of the hill, the fearsome thunderbolts crisscrossing the sky looked like creepers of light dangling in the air. Ominous dark clouds loaded with rain flashed with occasional rainbows. Beneath Giriraja, the cloud-like Mukunda Himself and the steady streaks of lightning *gopis* created another type of storm. The rainbow appeared as the peacock feather on Kṛṣṇa's crown, and the stream of Kṛṣṇa's beauty flowed like the constant rain. The only difference was that underneath the mountain Kṛṣṇa's brilliant *kaustubha* gem served as the effulgent sun.

Kṛṣṇa is the perfect conjugal lover. His face is a spotless moon and His eyes are always roaming seductively. To completely remove the Vrajavasis' anxiety about His fatigue from lifting Giriraja, Kṛṣṇa played sweetly again on His *murali*.

Hearing that ambrosial sound, one Vrajavasi said, "Look! Look! A blue lotus hangs over Kṛṣṇa's left ear. The pleasing vibration of His blissful flute spreads in all directions. In this joyful pastime, His creeper-like right eyebrow rises slightly, as if saying, 'What can you say about My left hand which is effortlessly holding up Giriraja?' Thus glittering with excellence, the all-attractive Giridhari displays His sweet power."

By the mercy of Govardhana Hill the Vrajavasis did not feel the least bit disturbed. Rather, they tasted endless happiness passing their time absorbed in loving thoughts of Kṛṣṇa. This pastime completely astonished the *brahmanas* and other devotees fixed in neutrality (*santa-rasa*). Radhika and the *gopis* in *madhurya rasa* exhibited their deep love for Kṛṣṇa. Among His friends (*sakhya-rasa*), the jokers like Madhumangala pleased Kṛṣṇa by laughing and merry-making. Intimate friends like Subala continually enthused and encouraged Him. Raktak, Patrak, and others in *dasya-rasa* constantly served Kṛṣṇa with affection. Thus the different associates of Kṛṣṇa delighted in their individual loving relationships with Him.

Mother Yasoda and others overcome with parental affection (*vatsalya-rasa*), however, felt very sad to see Kṛṣṇa like this. To please her son, Yasoda tried to offer Kṛṣṇa some juicy camphorated *tambula* made of cardamom, nutmeg, cloves, lime paste, *catechu*, and *betel* nut. Wrapped in a dark green *pan* leaf, this expertly made *tambula* had the power to aid digestion, remove anxiety, and fill one with pleasure. Holding it in her lotus palm, Yasoda tenderly offered it to Kṛṣṇa while pleading, "O my darling Damodara! Please stop playing Your melodious *murali*. The sound of the flute cannot fill Your stomach. Please take this and remove my anxiety. Why are You disturbing my mind by not eating? Now eat this wonderful *tambula* which will enchant Your mind. If You do not want it, then at least eat something that You like very much. You have passed many days without eating, so do not delay anymore. If You are waiting for the rain to stop, then please consider that Your brother Balarama is very much afflicted by

hunger. Since You will do anything for Your brother, please honor my request and accept this *tambula*.”

After saying this, Yasoda called, “Subala! You are overflowing with love for Kṛṣṇa. Since you are also the dear object of His affection, will you please offer this *tambula* to Kṛṣṇa?” Saying this, Yasoda put the *tambula* in his hand.

Kṛṣṇa’s dear friend Subala felt boundless joy as he held the *tambula* in one hand and removed Kṛṣṇa’s flute with his other hand. Taking the edge of his cloth, he gently cleansed Kṛṣṇa’s lotus face, which was adorned with *aguru* and slightly reddish in hue. Seeing Kṛṣṇa’s lips turn red from chewing the *tambula* offered by Subala, Yasoda smiled in happiness.

Outside the umbrella of Giriraja, the huge cloud formation sent by furious Indra poured incessant rains and blew fierce hurricane winds. Yet not even one particle of dust washed off the surface of Giriraja. The deer, birds, animals, and even the leaves on the trees remained totally unaffected by the devastating storm. The deluge, which assailed the earth after being brought from the ocean by the clouds, again ran back to the sea. The discomfort the clouds underwent from swallowing the ocean water and vomiting it back was the only result of their proposed calamity.

The storm tried his best to show off his power. But he soon became totally exhausted from pouring profuse rain. Alas! Alas! The clouds retreated and fell at the feet of their master. Illusioned by his rage, Indra felt no fatigue as he continued to attack Giriraja. Being blinded by anger, he finally lost all his intelligence and went totally blind.

The torrential rains and cyclone winds harassed Vrndavana continually for seven days. Although repeatedly trying to fulfill the order of Indra, whose intelligence was more crooked than millions of lightning bolts, the clouds could not destroy or even slightly disturb the people of Vrndavana. The big clouds and their assistants almost died from their hard labor to please Indra. Although pulled down from his platform of false pride and defeated, the shameful Indra retained his fighting spirit.

Those seven days felt like seven milleniums of intense pain for Indra. Yet the Vrajavasis saw it as seven joy-filled hours. O just see the wonderful splendor of the Lord’s divine prowess which transcends the comprehension

of even Brahma and Siva! Although Govardhana Hill is immovable, it rested on the hand of Kṛṣṇa.

For seven long days, the monsoon rains and horrific, earth-shaking winds tortured the people of the world with bitter suffering and untold miseries. The serene and peaceful Giriraja, however, was not the least bit disturbed. Being constantly bathed by the rains and anointed with the fragrance of Kṛṣṇa's divine body, Giriraja looked absolutely radiant and beautiful throughout the whole ordeal.

By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa the danger finally ended. In the distance, the Vrajavasis saw the gateways and roof top rooms of their houses glittering attractively from being washed by the heavy rains. A fresh clear sky appeared to fill all directions with auspiciousness. The people of Vṛndavana felt they had just emerged from a deep, dark well of calamity and come to the light of good fortune.

The earth planet thought it was again sitting on the tusks of Adi Varaha. The plants and creepers sprouted anew and unfurled fresh leaves. Just as one cured of the disease of insanity attains peace and no longer suffers from epileptic fits, similarly, the wind, now freed from the disease of devastation, blew gently. The rivers, the wives of the ocean, again flowed slowly and respectfully toward their husbands. Just as the forceful pushings of the mind subside as one advances on the path of God realization, similarly, the blasting clouds dissipated to leave a clear sky behind them.

After aborting seven children represented by the seven days and nights, the wife of time now gave birth to a beautiful son appearing as the auspicious eighth day. On that day, the Supreme Lord Giridhari said, "The fierce wind and rain has now ceased, and the sky is totally free from the clouds of devastation. Free from the thick covering of mud, the earth is now dry and smooth. After falling unconscious for one week, the sun opened his eyes. O residents Vṛndavana, your village has returned to its normal state. Now it is time to come out from beneath the mountain."

After hearing this, everyone assembled in a happy mood and led out the cows. The cows considered themselves fortunate because they got to relish the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's face for seven continuous days. They lost interest in other things that had previously pleased them. When the cowherd boys

called them out they delayed for a while, and then shot out like a volley of arrows. But when they saw Kṛṣṇa still under the hill, they quickly ran back and surrounded Him. Immediately, Kṛṣṇa drove them out again by glancing at them with the compassion of a friend.

From all directions, the smooth skinned, pleasant looking herds of cows streamed out from the valley under Govardhana Hill. As they came up they looked like the expanded hood of Sesa Naga rising out of Patalaloka, or a sheet of moonshine hiding in a cave out of fear of darkness, or like matted locks of diffused light being born from the crystal mountain of Giriraja.

Thus induced by Kṛṣṇa's words, the cowherd men gave up their fear and smiled cheerfully. With great enthusiasm they left the temporary village beneath Giriraja. The elated *gopis* cast veiled glances at Kṛṣṇa as they walked out from the hill. The effulgent *gopis* seemed like the rays of a brilliant light visible even in the daytime, or the dazzling rays emanating from the valuable jewels below the mountain, or the glowing light of the ruby atop the hood of a *naga* snake.

After the cowherd boys left, Kṛṣṇa set the hill down exactly in its previous location. He tossed Giriraja off His hand just like a child throwing a flower ball. Then Kṛṣṇa met His friends for more pastimes of wandering in Vrndavana. Overwhelmed with ecstatic love, the residents of Vrndavana came forward to greet Kṛṣṇa according to their individual relationships with Him.

His eyes pouring forth tears of love, Balarama warmly embraced Kṛṣṇa. Mother Yasoda said, "Alas! Alas! My son's body has been severely weakened from bearing such a heavy weight." Using her lotus-palm, Yasoda massaged Kṛṣṇa's left arm and kissed His hand affectionately. Rohini, who had attained the summit of parental affection, offered *arati* to Kṛṣṇa and Balarama with an artistically designed, jeweled *ghee* lamp.

With their hearts, which were abodes of deep love for Kṛṣṇa, the housewives of Vrndavana offered Him their full blessings. Then they worshiped Kṛṣṇa with yogurt, rice paddy, and fresh grass. The potent *brahmanas* and their attractive wives offered boons and words of praise. Sananda and the other elderly men bound by the ropes of intense parental affection embraced the boys and smelled their heads.

The beloved *gopis* and their associates, dyed in pure love and covered by shyness, also honored Kṛṣṇa and Balarama. They worshiped Them with their doe-eyed glances and their lotus faces blossoming with desire. While they embraced Kṛṣṇa and Balarama within their minds, their lips shone attractively with sweet seductive smiles.

As the spring season is ornamented with the months of Caitra and Vaisakha which are full of fragrant flowers, similarly, demigods such as the Siddhas, Vidyadharas, Gandharvas, and Kimpurusas showered flowers in great delight while singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa.

The demigods prayed, “All glories to the son of Nanda Maharaja! All glories to holy abode of Vrndavana, which abounds in blissful mellows! O Kṛṣṇa! You are enriched by superb qualities. The pure taste of serving Your lotus feet is the source of unlimited bliss in the hearts of realized souls. Your all-attractive, transcendental body is concentrated liquid nectar. The moonlight of Your nails, which shines like brilliant rubies, takes away all the miseries of Your intimate associates. There is no limit to Your fame. Hey Sridhara! Hey sober one! Hey superexcellent hero of Vrndavana! O *gopa* with a bluish body! May You always be victorious!

“Anyone who once says, ‘I am Yours! And from this day forward I completely surrender unto You’ is immediately delivered from material existence by Your mercy. It is impossible for us to calculate how much You reward one who serves Your enchanting lotus feet, which remove the miseries of repeated birth and death. O beloved of Gokula! You are served, worshiped, and glorified by pure devotees who are eternally liberated and full of knowledge. O Lord of all the demigods! Your transcendental behavior astonishes the entire universe. We repeatedly offer our obeisances unto You.

“O Kṛṣṇa, all glories unto You! Indra, who is especially angry, crooked, impudent, and falsely proud, misbehaved by cruelly attacking Vrndavana with his Samvartaka clouds. The Vrajavasis prayed to You for protection, and You saved them from destruction by holding up Giriraja with the splendid pole of Your arm. In this pastime, Giriraja sat in Your hand just like a play ball. You offered Your lotus hand to Giriraja as a wonderful bed.

“You turned Indra’s mountain of pride into an insignificant pebble. Just as a crest jewel is firmly fixed in the crown of a king, similarly, those opposed to You are tightly bound in the prison of material existence. Alas! What is the destiny of one full of false pride? O friend of the Vrajavasis! O ocean of compassion! O Lord of the three worlds who wanders throughout the creation! You personally maintain the surrendered souls by Your inconceivable potencies. But those bound in the prison house of pride never attain the fortune of serving Your lotus feet.

“O Lord, all victory unto You! You have sown the seed of conjugal love within the hearts of the *gopis*. O You, whose elegant crown is adorned with a peacock feather glistening attractively like a beautiful rainbow. You constantly churn the mellows of love into a condensed form, and then taste that bliss with Your intimate devotees.

“Without a doubt, Your body is totally transcendental. It is the origin of creation and ornamented with compassion. Your body is the source of unlimited glories and is the shelter of endless spiritual euphoria. You are the embodiment of fortune for the adept *yogis* seeking spiritual ecstasy in their hearts.

“Appearing fresh and ever-youthful, You always take pleasure in satisfying the residents of Vrndavana. Your body is the personification of complete jubilation and You are forever full of happiness. You perfectly execute each and every one of Your actions. All glories unto You! You are always yearning for the love of Your devotees. Your enemies consume themselves by envying You. When demons oppose you, You playfully taunt them. You are known as Syamasundara because Your spiritual body resembles the hue of a beautiful blue rain cloud.

“The devotees, who are like honeybees at Your lotus feet, have no desire for economic development, sense gratification, or salvation. One engaged in serving You never tries to enjoy husband, wife, son, and so on. For a devotee, You alone are the only wife, husband, child, teacher, and wealth. You are their fame, pride, and the very meaning of their lives.

“Of course, You are known only by Your *premi bhaktas*. Although we demigods attempt to glorify You, we do not really know You. You are far beyond the reach of prayers. Your effulgence derides the radiance of the

clouds. You take away the sufferings of the distressed. Your enchanting transcendental body surges with waves of amorous love. You turn Your enemies into insignificant beings. Your splendid moon-like face smashes Candra's pride to pieces, and Your presence makes Vrndavana beautiful. You remove all other aspirations from one who surrenders unto You. You are restless with hankering to ever delight in love. All glories to You! All glories to You!

“O gentle-eyed one! Your beautiful eyes have forcefully captured the splendor of the lotus. O one who allures the eyes with the *camara* fan of Your artistic hair style. O lotus-eyed one! Your sweet lips deride the taste of ripe *bimba* fruits. You give bliss and elegance to the world. Your glittering teeth, more attractive than *kunda* flowers, mock the brilliance of a row of pearls. O effulgent one! Your cheerful smile shines like twinkling stars. All glories unto You!

“Your singing and flute playing unfold many erotic pastimes. Seeing You saturates the mind and heart with ecstasy. You are decorated with glimmering golden earrings that swing to and fro, and reflect splendidly on Your soft cheeks. Your opulent ornaments accent Your exquisite beauty.

“The bees hum loudly as they hover above the garland draped on Your powerful broad chest. That soft pure garland is sprinkled with pollen and drops of honey. Out of Your infinite compassion, You fill the hearts of Your devotees with delight. All glories to You!

“You are the abode of all desirable beauty. The lines of Laksmi compliment Your enchanting chest. Your garland swings out of fear and Your necklaces move like waves. Your handsome chest induces lusty desires within the impenetrable hearts of chaste housewives. Seeing Your own reflection in a mirror, Your pride increases like a sporting new Cupid. Your chest is further beautified by Your arms which resemble the elegant trunk of a baby elephant. All glories to You!

“O chief advisor of the cowherd men! You are their leader and only shelter. O beloved son of Nanda Maharaja! You are glorious and venerable. You alone can remove the dense pride of Indra. Please make us mirthful by bestowing Your mercy. Brahma praised You for killing the demons drunk

with power. We demigods can never conquer You in battle, so please, therefore, rule us according to Your free will.

“You remove the miseries from the three worlds, stop the cycle of birth and death, and delight the hearts of Your devotees. A peacock feather decorates Your brilliant crown. You sport in the forest groves along the bank of the Kalindi. You destroy the mode of ignorance. We worship Your limbs which glisten like the branches of a *tamala* tree. Your brilliant dark blue form derides a mountain of *kajala*. All glories to You! Please makes us intensely attached to You and engage us in Your service. Free us from the control of lust and keep us under Your control.

“Please destroy the fear of repeated birth and death. You withhold Your kindness from the cruel and wicked, therefore, please remove the disease of desiring honor and distinction. Please make us fortunate by manifesting fully in our hearts. Hey learned one! Your wandering in the *kunjās* of Vrndavana excites the mind and exhilarates the heart! You shine brilliantly like the autumn moon, and Your gentle smile is alive with pastimes. The witty words flowing from Your mouth produce infinite varieties of intimate mellows.

“You are always anxious to relish emotional ecstasies within Your heart. You are famous throughout the *Vedas* for dispelling doubts and solving disputes. Your pleasing words fill the ears with waves of loving flavors. Your inner joy arises from pure love. You are a mine of transcendental splendor! Your roving eyes, which mock blossoming lotuses, are slightly reddish due to the intoxication of lust. Seeing Your eyes pleases the eyes of everyone. As the reservoir of mercy, You deliver the entire world from distress and dangers.

“You establish rules and regulations to create good fortune for the people of the world. You sit on the lotus of the heart of a devotee who glorifies You with pure love. But when You get angry, You can act like Yamaraja to easily crush the prowess of an insubordinate servant like King Indra. You are decorated with the rare jewel of formidability. You fearlessly lifted Govardhana, and stood like a graceful dancer effortlessly holding the mountain in Your lotus hand. The white lotus tucked over Your ear resembles a conchshell, and Your earrings glitter like sunshine. You are

famous for satisfying the devotees who desire to see Your magnificent form.

“You are known by men and demigods. You mystify both the moving and non-moving. You are the indomitable force! With the pinky finger of Your left hand You held up the vast mountain of Govardhana. Colorful varieties of loving moods enhance Your pure character. O illustrious one! Although the Vraja *gopis* are Your most confidential lovers, You uphold the strictest codes of morality. You compassionately protected Gokula from the clouds of devastation that assailed Your beloved Vrndavana with floods, lightning bolts, and torrents of rain. Abounding in kindness, You always do good for everyone and satisfy all desires. O skillful one! Your youthful elegance conquers the splendor of a cloudbank. You appear in this world to bestow Your blessings, and violently suppress opposition to pure *dharma*.

“You dress in gorgeous, glimmering golden garments which outshine the pollen of *kadamba* flowers. You are the wisest among all wise men. You conquered the crafty Indra and shattered his false pride. May You, who affectionately protected the residents of Gokula by lifting Giriraja, be the continual object of our glorification.

“O Lord! Just with Your hands You easily pulverized the pride of invincible demons like Bakasura, Putana, Vastasura, and others. Like a powerful snake, You instantly subdued Your enemies such as Aghasura. You demolished the pride of the angry Lord Brahma. You protected the Yamuna by banishing Kaliya with Your forceful dancing. O beautiful one! You courageously saved Your friends from the forest fire by putting them in illusion.

“O Lord! Whenever You associate intimately with the *gopis*, Your mind becomes agitated to enjoy conjugal pastimes due to the intensity of their pure love. We saw this tendency of Yours when You stole the clothes of the Vraja *kumaris*. In this humorous pastime You captivated the minds of the innocent girls with Your sweet pleasant words. By accepting the offering of delicious foods from the *yajna patnis*, You reciprocated with their love. You are the abode of blissful festivals.

“O intelligent one! You saved the world from the deluge of destruction! You removed Indra’s pride by stopping his worship and by defeating him when

he attacked Vrndavana. You satisfied the desires of everyone by lifting the king of all mountains. You bestow happiness according to one's mood of love toward You.

“O Lord, You please the eyes of everyone! You forgive even the lowest, most offensive living entities within the universe if they surrender unto You. O Lord, You always increase the happiness of Your intimate servants. You manifested dreadful boldness by uprooting Indra's Nanda-kanana forest with the peak of Giriraja.

“When will we fallen ones be eligible to hear Your auspicious glories? You possess adorable beauty and deserve to be worshiped by everyone. O Lord! Who can completely know all of Your unlimited attributes? No one in the universe has the qualities that You do. O embodiment of all pleasing traits! You are inconceivable to the non-devotees, but You are the benevolent maintainer for one who surrenders to You in distress or humility.

“We beg You, therefore, to please show compassion and protect us. Please beautify and enlighten us so that we can surrender unto You and drown in the ocean of Your blissful service. Ignorance and illusion have nearly killed us. Please fill us with detachment and ever-increasing love for You. Please destroy our wicked thoughts and empower us to properly glorify You.

“O Lord! We offer our obeisances unto you. Your splendor is immeasurable! O embodiment of compassion! If You give us Your mercy then we can take shelter of Your lotus feet, offer our respects, and chant Your holy name. All glories to You! You continually perform exciting pastimes in the hearts Your pure devotees.

“You always give pleasure to the king and queen of Vrndavana. Your wandering through the forests of Vrndavana nourishes it with the full extent of Your compassion. You crush the conceit born of false ego. At every moment You give joy to Your devotees. To protect Your own community, You are ready to destroy millions of enemies.

“O younger brother of Baladeva! You are always fixed in the highest bliss. O worshipable one! You are the superexcellent master of all arts. Everything about Your character is pure and sublime. You astonish the heart with Your sensational pastimes. Although You are all pervading, You are rarely perceived.

“You are famous as Sri Hari because You remove all bad behavior from Your servitors. You instantly favor a repentant soul who sincerely prays, ‘O my Lord! You are the deliverer from material bondage. For so long I have not served you. Now please accept me and engage me in Your loving service.’ You give inner strength to the repentant and take pleasure in protecting Your devotees. You are an ocean of the finest qualities.

“You obliterate the pride of Cupid. Radhika always serves You and pleases You more than anyone else. Sri Radha, who has perfectly mastered the sixty-four arts, is the main support for all Your astounding transcendental adventures. You created a jovial celebration by lifting Govardhana Hill. The mind of a humble and submissive person always dwells in You alone.

“You give everything in charity. Among millions of wise and venerable demigods like Brahma and Siva, You alone have the power to award all auspiciousness and give ecstatic love to every living entity. Just by a glance You can enlighten and liberate anyone. You fulfill the desires of one who is anxious to glorify Your transcendental pastimes.

“Whenever You hear jingling ankle-bells and the loud sound of various percussion instruments such as the *din-din* drum played by the *gopis*, Your heart leaps with a desire to relish intimate pleasure pastimes. Your characteristic of being controlled by Your devotees is Your natural embellishment. Alas! You are very difficult to understand. Are Your pastimes also inconceivable by Sankarsana? Indeed, You are truly transcendental.

“The impious can never comprehend You with their logic and argument. You deliver one from the cycle of birth and death. Your playing is like the sporting of a mad elephant. You are spilling over with humorous pastimes. O Lord, who can properly glorify You? *Jnanis* and mental speculators can never perceive the truth about You. Being completely pure, You exist beyond all contamination of the material energy. O peaceful one! What more can we say? You are the benefactor of everyone.

“You eternally exist as the sublime mysterious one, beyond the injunctions of the *sastras*. O supreme controller! Even Mahesa cannot fathom Your pastimes, what to speak of Kuvera and other celestials. O friend of humanity! Please reside in our hearts! Your devotees become deeply

satisfied whenever You manifest before them. The demigods like us have been severely oppressed by tyrants like Kamsa. Please enliven us by showering Your mercy upon us.

“You are witty, clever, attractive, and enchanting. Your matchless prowess always benefits the thousands of gorgeous *gopis*. Your love is ever expanding throughout the day and night. In conjugal enjoyment, You take the aggressive role and behave like a maddened elephant in the *kunjās*. Your handsome body appears like a mound of *kajala*. We constantly pray to Your charming pastimes that surround You like a dazzling aura.”

Thus the perfectly composed prayers of the demigods resounded throughout the atmosphere to enchant the hearts of everyone with the glories of Kṛṣṇa.

Vrajaraja Nanda, who has a jovial personality, ruled his kingdom with excessive affection. After the Govardhana pastime, the respectable men of Vṛndavana approached Nanda Maharaja and appealed to him, “O King of Vṛndavana! Although You completely removed the fear and doubts we had about stopping the sacrifice for Indra, due to our wealth and prestige, we are still somewhat contaminated with suspicion. In great amazement we watched Indra send innumerable Samvartaka clouds to drown the world and completely wash away our village of Vṛndavana. Your seven year-old son, who is a fountainhead of youth beautified with long tresses of curly hair, appears like the embodiment of sweet joy. We saw Him pick up the massive mountain of Govardhana with His left hand and hold it for seven continuous days!

“Such a marvelous feat is very difficult even for Lord Siva, the master of Parvati. Just as an elephant easily plucks a lotus full of fragrant honey with his trunk, your son effortlessly picked up Giriraja. By doing this, Kṛṣṇa turned the famous Indra, who was infatuated with unlimited anger, into an insignificant village goat. Therefore we cannot understand the identity of this person who bewilders us and covers our knowledge. As soon as Kṛṣṇa appeared in our village, He became the life and soul of everyone. His lips are as sweet as a *bandhuli* flower, yet He drank the deadly poison of Putana’s breast milk, purified her, and made her His nursemaid.

“One day Yasoda placed sleepy Kṛṣṇa beneath a cart to take rest. Suddenly just by kicking His delicate feet, which are softer than a bunch of *asoka*

leaves, He smashed the cart and killed the hideous Sakatasura who was hiding there. Thereafter, with the ring of His two arms, which break our patience and are unconquerable by men and demigods, He clutched the throat of the terrible windstorm demon and squeezed out his life. Then in the course of playing, He killed offensive demons like Vatsasura, Bakasura, and Aghasura. In this activity, Kṛṣṇa did not fight or even feel the least bit fatigued.

“By nature this boy of yours is simply enjoying throughout the day and night. His ecstasy and loving affection seem to increase at every moment! We have never seen anyone with such unique matchless beauty. You must have noticed all these things too. We beg you, therefore, to please reveal the truth about the real identity of Your son.”

Maharaja Nanda laughed loudly in appreciation of the statements of the cowherd men. His lips refulgent with a glorious sweetness, Nanda said, “O respectable cowherd men! Please listen attentively and put your faith in my truthful words. Garga Muni, who has a pure and blissful mind, and who is adorned with the quality of omniscience, performed the name-giving ceremony of my son. That great *muni* dispelled the doubts and illusions about Kṛṣṇa’s identity by stating, ‘There is no limit to the good fortune of your son. Even the *paramahamsas* who have reached the zenith of knowledge cannot perceive the mysterious truth about Him. In each of the four *yugas* your son has appeared in four different colors. In Satya-yuga, He came in a white color; in Treta-yuga, He proclaimed victory in a red color; in Dvarpara-yuga, He appeared dark blue like a rain cloud, and in most Kali-yugas He comes in a white color.

“Garga Muni continued, ‘But once in the day of Brahma, He appears in a dark blue form as Kṛṣṇa, and afterwards He appears in a yellow color. By His own desire and spiritual power He appeared as the son of Vasudeva. Therefore, He is also named Vasudeva, and He is equal to Narayana. Those who love Him become free from all offenses, experience auspiciousness everywhere, and remain always satisfied. He is the only object of love for both men and women. Out of fear of Him, no enemy comes here to Vrndavana.’”

Nanda Maharaja said, “Therefore my dear cowherd men, you need not be afraid in this matter. My son Kṛṣṇa acts for everyone’s benefit in all

respects. It is quite fitting that you have developed such affection for Him. Do not allow the mood of awe and reverence (*aisvarya bhava*) to reduce the intensity of your friendly love toward Him. On its own, the mood of majesty (*aisvarya bhava*) is neither natural nor intimate. Do not, therefore, put yourself in distress by maintaining this mood of awe and reverence toward Kṛṣṇa. Make this youthful son of mine the object of your compassion.” Thus relieved and satisfied, the residents of Vṛndavana gladly returned to their respective homes.

Sometime later, Kṛṣṇa, being attracted by the opulence of Giriraja and to get relief from the fatigue of holding him up for a week, strolled along a ridge of Govardhana Hill. Kṛṣṇa walked there alone in order to bestow mercy upon the heavenly King Indra. The cowherd boys suffered greatly in the absence of their beloved friend. Kṛṣṇa’s pastime of lifting Govardhana Hill had covered the one with a thousand eyes in layers of intense embarrassment. As a result, Indra abandoned his bad qualities of anger and pride, and came to Vṛndavana from his heavenly abode accompanied by a *kamadhenu*, who carried the sweet smell of good fortune. Indra wanted to meet Kṛṣṇa and beg pardon for his grave offense.

In her humble way, the *surabhi* cow, accompanying Indra, approached Kṛṣṇa and spoke affectionately with the logic of the goddess of learning. Surabhi said, “O Lord! You are the *tilaka* mark of good fortune on the head of the capital of Nanda Maharaja. Please hear my words attentively. You are famous throughout the universe and worshipable by all living beings. You are incomprehensible and You manifest incredible opulence in this world. Even if hundreds of angry Indras try to kill the cows and *gopas* with fast moving ferocious clouds pouring torrents of rain, You will always protect Gokula and saturate its residents with complete bliss.

“Being pleased by Your merciful behavior, Brahma anxiously told me, ‘O goddess Surabhi! Go. happily bathe the “Indra of Gokula,” who is the beloved son of Nanda Maharaja. Under Kṛṣṇa’s compassionate protection, the Vrajavasis, who are praised by the poets, rebelled against Indra even though they are not envious of him. I am well known for my own misdeed of previously stealing Kṛṣṇa’s boyfriends and cows. Surabhi! I will follow you on my swan, along with the *munis*, *rsis*, Kinnaras, Caranas, Siddhas, and demigods, in order to relish the spiritual bliss of this pastime.’”

Surabhi continued, “Hey Kṛṣṇacandra! Just see the person standing behind me. He is always overwhelmed with grief from his anger and offenses. Casting his eyes down in shame, he repents for his rude and arrogant actions. Within his mind he is always rebuking himself. He really wants to be forgiven for his grave offenses to You, but he is afraid to step forward. If You allow, he will come and submit his petition.”

Indra wiped the tears from his thousand eyes and got down from his mountain of false pride. As he lay on the ground surrendered to the Lord, it appeared that the radiance from the expensive gems on his crown illuminated the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. After lying a long time on the ground, Indra stood up, folded his hands, and bowed his head. With fear and devotion in his heart he gazed at Kṛṣṇa’s jewel-like toenails glowing like moonshine. Out of ignorance and false pride he had previously acted foolishly. Now humbled, Indra offered prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

King Indra said, “Kṛṣṇa! You are the Lord of all lords! You are the beloved son of the King of Vṛndavana! Your nature is to be totally independent! Grand festivals are held just to worship You. You are the highest truth, so it is difficult for someone like me to understand Your greatness. Those blinded by the arrogance of pride become intoxicated by drinking the wine of their false egos. Then how can they think favorably about Your glories? Since their eyes are diseased, they cannot perceive their own perverted actions. They are just like owls that cannot see the light of the radiant sun.

“Therefore, O kind one! Please listen to me. It is quite befitting that You stopped my sacrifice in order to severely punish one whose vision had been so infected with false pride. For a blind man, a stick is the best medicine. O Lord, You are an ocean of compassion! Although You taught me a good lesson, I took it in the wrong way. The intelligence of hypocrites always directs them to act incorrectly.

“What can be said of us who lust after the poison of sense gratification, if even the greatest sages, who are free from material attachments, can become agitated by the powerful mode of passion. Unless Your insurmountable illusory energy acts, then how can false ego exist? All glories to You, the benevolent one! You are the essence of everything in the three worlds. You are the embodiment of auspiciousness for Vṛndavana. O matchless one! O Damodara! You are the abode of transcendental names

and qualities. O friend of Dama, Sudama, and Vasudama, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

“You are difficult to know. Please do not cover us with illusion. O Lord! Please be kind to us. With a slight sidelong glance from Your eyes You can cause fortune or misfortune. O unborn one! Although You never take birth, You appear in unlimited incarnations. In bygone times, You pleased the demigods and enjoyed Yourself by becoming Upendra. Just now You will enjoy being bathed by Surabhi. You are the blue sapphire crest-jewel in the crown of the Indras in every universe.

“O lifter of the great mountain of Govardhana! Although previously known as Abhirama (beautiful and pleasing), You will now be known by the name of Govinda, which Your devotees will regularly chant. *Go* means tending and caring for cows. O Lord! From today, everyone will call You Govinda.”

After becoming purified of his false pride by glorifying Kṛṣṇa, Indra commenced the auspicious bathing ceremony. Brahma, the Four Kumaras, Uma, Mahadeva, Tamburu, Kartikeya, Narada, and Savita attended Kṛṣṇa’s *abhiseka*. Many exalted *rsis* and sages beautified the assembly. The effulgent wives of the demigods such as Arundhati also visited. The celestial Apsaras like Urvashi watching from the sky enhanced the festival with their splendid forms and qualities.

Govardhana, with the limbs of his own body, provided an elegant throne made of smooth stones and jewels. The demigod Varuna personally held a fine white umbrella over Kṛṣṇa’s head, which had a fringe of hanging pearls that appeared like falling raindrops. Vayu, his arm trembling in ecstatic devotion, stood beside the Lord fanning Him with a *camara* whisk. The full moon assumed the form of a mirror made of jewels.

Pancajanya, the Lord’s conchshell, sanctified the atmosphere with loud sounds. The effulgent Sudarsana *cakra* expanded as many lamps to illumine all directions. Kṛṣṇa’s white lotus flower expanded into many white umbrellas to shield the Lord. Kaumodik, the Lord’s club who is honored for his strength, stood like a jeweled pillar for the bathing ceremony.

The personified forms of the sacred oceans, rivers, ponds, and lakes came with pots of water to bathe Kṛṣṇa. Mother Bhumi collected the finest quality earth in a box covered with seven jewels. Placing the box on a

jeweled plate, she slowly approached Kṛṣṇa and offered it to Him. The best herbs and medicinal plants personified presented themselves for Kṛṣṇa's service. Great sacred trees such as the *banyan* and *peepul* manifested in person to give Kṛṣṇa leaves containing the five types of tastes in golden pots studded with gems of *lapis lazuli*. The forest gods from the ten directions brought water pots covered with coconuts and various delicious fruits. The Lord of the mountains brought exotic gems and jewels.

The nine jewels, the eight *yogic siddhis*, the best jewels like *cintamani*, *kamadhenu*, and desire-trees all assumed charming forms to worship the Lord. Standing at a distance, they faced Kṛṣṇa with folded hands. The goddess of Mt. Sumeru offered a golden cloth, and the goddess of the Himalayas presented splendid necklaces. The goddess of Gandhamadana Mountain brought golden lotuses from Manasarovara Lake and personally strung a garland for Kṛṣṇa.

The goddess of the Malaya Mountain delivered the best quality sandalwood. Grinding it on a stone from Govardhana, she made a smooth fragrant paste for Kṛṣṇa. Without the knowledge of her husband, Parvati handed Kṛṣṇa a gorgeous jeweled necklace. With their own hands, the Sapta-Rsis plucked fresh lotus buds from the Mandakini River to offer to the Lord. When needed for service, the sun-god made the lotus flowers blossom for the Lord. The shining of the moon appeared as a mirror.

Agni offered an artistically designed golden incense pot with a hanging fringe made of coral. The best quality *aguru* scent burned in the pot, and rose into the sky through its thousands of holes. Garuda expanded his effulgent golden wings to form a protective canopy over the Lord. All the kings of the snakes fanned their hoods to serve as jeweled flags to surround the bathing platform.

The various *mantras* and prayers used for *abhiseka* like *purusa-sukta* and *sri-sukta* took personal forms to chant in alternating low and high tones. The *surabhi* cow contributed the *panca-gavya* and Lord Brahma provided the *panca-amṛta*. Airavata (Indra's elephant carrier) filled the gem-studded bathing pots with water from the Akash-Ganga, which he carried in his trunk. The demigods in the sky vibrated instrumental music.

The celestial ladies showered flowers from Nanda-kanana while intoxicated Gandharvas, Caranas, Kimpurusas, Siddhas, Sadhyas, and Vidyadharas joyfully danced in the sky. All the Apsaras appeared to please Kṛṣṇa with a special drama. They conveyed the meaning of the play with various dance steps and facial expressions. Upon beholding the elegant form of Syamasundara, the famous Apsara Urvashi felt enchanted and devoted herself to the Lord.

Taking the lead in directing the bathing festival of Kṛṣṇa, Lord Brahma approached Surabhi and said, “Today is the best day to observe a happy occasion. O simple village folk! Do not delay. Everyone queue up behind Lord Siva and please start the *abhiseka*. Before I take my turn, let the leading ladies of the universe come forward. First Arundhati, who tried to please me, should bathe the Lord. Then Anasuya, who is non-envious and free from passion and ignorance, and Parvati, the respectable daughter of the Himalayas who gives bliss to everyone, should step forward. Then the other exalted ladies such as Gayatri, the mother of the *Vedas* who welcomes the Lord when He awakens; Aditi, the mother of the demigods whose love is never broken; Sarasvati, the goddess of learning; and the beautiful Svaha should bathe Kṛṣṇa.”

Then Lord Brahma, who meditated upon a lotus, asked Kṛṣṇa to sit down on the bathing platform. He began the worship by washing Kṛṣṇa’s feet and offering Him delicious *madhuparka* and *tambula*. According to a previous arrangement, the senior ladies of Vrndavana, their hearts drowning in *prema*, bathed Giridhari with fragrant *panca-amṛta*, *panca-gavya*, and the milk dripping from Surabhi’s milk bag.

Seeing the captivating splendor of Murari’s body during the *abhiseka* made the onlookers question His identity. They wondered, “Is this a monsoon cloud being bathed in moonshine? Is it a concentration of all blueness covered with white? Is it a small hill of blue-sapphires covered by the pure water of crystal gems? Is it a fresh *tamala* tree decorated with tiny radiant pearls? Is it a blue lotus covered with bright white camphor powder?”

Just like enthusiastic mothers anxious to bathe their adorable children, Gayatri, Parvati, Aditi, and the other chaste demigoddesses like Arundhati stepped forward and smeared Kṛṣṇa’s body with oil and fragrant cleansing powders. One after another the Four Kumaras and the Sapta-rsis bathed

Giridhari while chanting *mantras*. Ordered by Brahma, the Four Kumaras offered water with their folded palms. Feeling great ecstasy, the young sages cried and shivered in delight. After smearing fragrant reddish oil upon Kṛṣṇa's body, Parvati and other ladies performed the *sahasra-patra snana*. They held a plate above Kṛṣṇa's head that had a thousand holes and showered Him with streams of crystal clear, camphorated water. By the powerful presence of the *kama-dhenu*, *kalpa-taru*, and *cintamani* gems everything required for Kṛṣṇa's bathing automatically manifested.

After Kṛṣṇa's bath some pretty chaste girls dried His beautiful body with fine soft cloths. Different girls dried His hair, chest, hands, legs, and feet. One young girl, with the mood of an intimate lover, wrapped Kṛṣṇa's body with a fresh dry cloth while removing the wet one and wringing it out. After they had dried Kṛṣṇa's body from head to toe a few times, Parvati advised the young girls how to neatly dress Him.

They lovingly offered Kṛṣṇa the best quality garments, ornaments, and unguents which they had previously collected. Although Kṛṣṇa accepted all this on Brahma's request, He felt somewhat disturbed because His confidential pastimes with the *gopas* and *gopis* were temporarily interrupted. Despite His anxiety, Kṛṣṇa did not want to interfere with the demigods who tasted so much happiness from bathing Him. Being Kṛṣṇa's devotees, they tried their best to serve Him with affection. Kṛṣṇa accepted their offerings but remained grave.

After Kṛṣṇa's bath and dressing, Brahma offered Him an auspicious seat under a tree. Brahma wanted to give the utmost pleasure to the Lord by worshiping Him with all opulence. Along with offering the standard sixteen items of *puja*, Brahma also intended to chant some elaborate *mantras*. While Brahma was making these arrangements, Lord Siva approached him and said, "O Brahma! There is a well-known saying that an intelligent person does not worry. Kṛṣṇa's *puja* will be done by this small boy standing in front."

Just nearby an attractive effulgence emanated from the eighteen syllable *mantra* (Gopala *mantra*) which had manifested a personified form of a small boy. Seeing that everyone in the assembly was pleased with this little boy, Brahma said, "O, the Gopala *mantra* of ecstatic mellows has come in person. Narada Muni gave this great *mantra*, whose meter is *gayatri*, to

men and sages in order to remove the obstacles to *bhakti* from their hearts. Thus I am being completely distinguished in two ways. Now I will also worship Kṛṣṇa by chanting this *mantra*.”

Empowered by the Gopala *mantra*, Brahma worshiped Kṛṣṇa. Many eminent devotees attended the *puja* including Narada and *rsis* like Sanaka, who uproots all anti-devotional desires; Dhruva, the ideal of devotional determination; Prahlada, who gives delight to all, and the Vasus, who are eternally fixed in the *Satvata* philosophy. Stepping forward, Brahma washed Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Then he sat down in the lotus posture and gazed appreciatively at the Lord with his eight eyes.

The milk ocean personified brought valuable bathing pots for the Lord, along with many big beautiful, pure white conchshells. Brahma was anxious because there were no stands to hold them. Suddenly, Mt. Meru personified appeared with many golden three-legged stands to properly hold those conches. The demigods and their wives worshiped Kṛṣṇa with a variety of articles. The goddess of Kailasa presented an auspicious quartz crystal *lota* that increased everyone’s happiness. The splendidly beautiful goddess of the Himalayas offered a fancy tray of sweet-smelling wild flowers. The *vanadevis* supplied fragrant forest flowers, sun-dried rice, barley, *kusa* grass, sesame seeds, white mustard seeds, wild black rice, *darbha* grass, *aparajita* flowers, and other natural items mixed with water to bathe Kṛṣṇa’s attractive lotus feet. They also provided captivatingly aromatic nutmeg, cloves, and allspice for washing His mouth.

Bhumi-devi delivered incredible natural scents. Some demigods from the Nanda-kanana forest donated an ornament made from divine, wish fulfilling flowers along with garments of the finest yellow cloth. Svaha, the wife of Agni, offered a brilliant lamp containing *ghee* from *surabhi* cows and natural camphor scent.

The *kamadhenus* delivered an abundance of heavenly milk products. Aditi furnished many kinds of fancy cakes and sweet pies. Saci-devi, Indra’s wife, supplied enchanting *tambula* covered with golden *pan* leaves. The demigods and demigoddesses arrived from every direction bringing valuable items to offer to Kṛṣṇa. In great joy, Brahma chanted the *mula mantras* to initiate the auspicious bathing ceremony.

The demigods played the appropriate melodies on their kettledrums while the Apsaras danced with euphoria. The Gandharvas and Caranas sang with youthful exuberance to fill everyone's heart with bliss. Kartikeya devotedly held an umbrella over Kṛṣṇa's head.

The *rsis* recited purifying hymns. Brahma adorned Kṛṣṇa's forehead with pleasing, artistically drawn *tilaka*. Overwhelmed in jubilation, he placed an opulent crown on Kṛṣṇa's head. The potent jewels on that crown flashed light in all directions. While setting the crown, Brahma said, "O Kṛṣṇa, You are the supreme king among all the kings of the universe!"

Hearing this, *rsis* like Sunanda and others loudly chanted selected prayers, "All glories to the enchanter of Vrndavana! O son of Nanda Maharaja! O almighty one! You are the charming beloved of the splendid *gopis*! You are the crest-jewel of all the demigods! The nectar of serving Your lotus feet far surpasses the bliss of *brahman*. O Govinda! You are the original cause of all creation. We offer our repeated obeisances unto You."

After preparing himself by setting aside his snake ornaments and skull garland, and by taking a bath in the Manasi Ganga to wash off his ashes, Lord Siva offered the final *arati*. He worshiped Kṛṣṇa with pure fragrant clay, incense, paddy, an elegant jeweled *ghee* lamp, and sweet-smelling scents. He chanted various *mantras* to conclude the *arati* and *abhiseka*. Following the Vedic injunctions, Gayatri, Gauri, Arundhati and other wives of the demigods took turns offering *arati* with *ghee* lamps. As the worship concluded, Narada Muni merged in ecstasy as he sang about Kṛṣṇa's pastime of lifting Govardhana Hill. Tamburu, the king of the Gandharvas, sang along with him.

Brahma distributed *maha-prasadam* to all the devotees at the conclusion of Govinda's bathing ceremony. Lord Brahma gave the following order to the personified conches, jewels, *kalpa-tarus*, *cintamani* gems and so on, "Please decorate and ornament the sages, the demigods and their wives, the lord of the snakes, and all the other guests." Everyone attending Kṛṣṇa's glorious *abhiseka* received priceless gifts in charity. Feeling the supreme euphoria from successfully conducting the *abhiseka*, Lord Brahma looked as brilliant as the sun. Before returning to their celestial homes, all the demigods respectfully circumambulated Govinda.

However, Indra and Surabhi remained behind for a moment. After the four-headed one and all the demigods departed, Kṛṣṇa addressed the fearless intelligent Indra. In a happy humorous mood, Kṛṣṇa said, “Is your anger now pacified? Tell me truthfully. You are close to Me, so you should not conceal the mood of your heart. I did not subdue your anger out of revenge or enmity. But I wanted to show how your actions were full of false pride. By nature I cannot bear to see My own devotees possessing false pride. It is well known that such persons deserve to be punished by Me.

“O Indra, I favored you by stopping the sacrifice. O subduer of your enemies! It does not suit you to maintain envy toward Me. Now return to Svarga and enjoy your position. Do not become carried away by your wealth and lose your intelligence again.”

Indra listened patiently to Kṛṣṇa’s compassionate words and accepted His kind chastisement. After respectfully circumambulating the Lord, he went back to Indrapuri. Then Kṛṣṇa anointed Surabhi with the fragrance of His pure affection and bid her farewell. Dressed in a glimmering new golden outfit, Kṛṣṇa looked most beautiful as He returned to Vṛndavana. It seemed as if He had just returned after a moment’s absence.

Chapter Sixteen: Rescuing Nanda Baba from Varunaloka Showing Brahman to the Vrajavasis

The variegated, all-attractive pastimes of Kṛṣṇa increase the pleasure of those who derive happiness from hearing the expert narrations of the *Puranas*. Upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's thrilling exploits one realizes that all other stories are worthless. Because Kṛṣṇa is an overflowing reservoir of all good qualities, hearing about His activities gives full satisfaction to the ears. His splendid all-attractive transcendental form, gracefully curved from head to toe, is worthy of everyone's respect and worship. Kṛṣṇa's pastime of lifting Govardhana Hill enchanted the whole universe. The simple wives of the Vraja *gopas* are famous for relishing pastimes with Kṛṣṇa that are far more intimate than all the pastimes of Lakṣmi. On His forehead Kṛṣṇa wears brilliant *tilaka* made from *kunkuma*, and His curly dark blue hair is beautified with magnificent ornaments made from *bakula* flowers. Kṛṣṇa defeats thousands of Cupids with His sweet beauty, and He brings ever-increasing good fortune to the Vraja *gopis* who are expert in the sixty-four arts.

Kṛṣṇa protects the world from the disturbance of proud atheists. Siva and all the other *devatas* glorify Him for devastating the demoniac descendants of Aditi. He satisfies the hearts of all observers with the exquisite pearl necklace sitting on His glistening dark-blue chest. He is called Nandanandana, the beloved son Vrajaraja Nanda. Kṛṣṇa is also known as Govinda because He lifted Govardhana (*govardhana dhrti*) to curb the pride of Indra, and because His beauty is enhanced by His natural gravity (*govardhana dhrti*).

The Supreme Lord passed His days enjoying various loving relationships with the inhabitants of Vṛndavana. Kṛṣṇa and His effulgent companions continued to perform their pleasing pastimes of herding the multitudes of cows. One *ekadasi*, Nanda Baba, the king of the *gopas*, happily observed a fast. The next day on *dvadasi* he had to break the fast at the right moment in order to complete his vow. But due to a short breaking period, he hastily

bathed in the Yamuna River at an inappropriate time along with a few pious friends. Even though he had bathed at an inauspicious time, Nanda Maharaja did not consider it offensive since he had acted only to honor the *dvadasi tithi* (time juncture).

Following the rules of scripture, he submerged himself reverently in the Yamuna. But the servants of Varuna angrily arrested Nanda Maharaja and put him in great distress for bathing too early in the morning. Nanda Maharaja had impeccable character, but due to a slight deviation from the rules, he was seized by Varuna-deva, the Lord of the waters. Unaware of his destination, Nanda felt completely distraught.

Standing on the bank of the Yamuna, the friends of Nanda Maharaja panicked with fear and confusion. They shouted, “What has happened? What has happened?” Seeing that they could do nothing to help him, they approached Kṛṣṇa, who destroys all fear and spoke anxiously, “O Kṛṣṇa, who rewards the pious, punishes the evil, befriends the distressed, and delivers the bound! Please help us! Please help us! Something tragic has happened. Some proud persons kidnapped Your father, who is worshipable by Lord Brahma, while he bathed in the Yamuna. O mighty-armed one! Please save (*trayatam*) him! Go there and deliver (*atra ayatam*) him! Only You can save him from this terrible calamity.”

The cowherd men ran helplessly hither and thither on the banks of the Yamuna. Hearing their anguished cries, Kṛṣṇa considered, “This is the irreversible action of the foolish and lowly servants of Varuna.” Thinking like this, Kṛṣṇa submerged in the Yamuna in order to visit the city of Varuna to bless him with His presence. For some reason, Kṛṣṇa felt attracted to Varuna even though he had improperly treated His father Nanda Maharaja.

The young *gopis* of Gokula and everyone else on the bank of the river fell into depression when Kṛṣṇa left for Varuna’s abode. Though the gorgeous *Vraja gopis* did not always see Kṛṣṇa, because of their intense attachment to Him and because they stayed in His village, they felt they lived in the same house as Kṛṣṇa. Fearing that He had departed for the other world, the *gopis* lost all strength and collapsed on the ground. At this perilous time, one moment seemed like a thousand *yugas*.

In this state the *gopis* could not hear anything, see anything, or say anything. Their minds went with Kṛṣṇa and their bodies shook uncontrollably. In a world full of changes, pure love is the only constant. Although withering away due to separation from Kṛṣṇa, Radhika managed to sustain Her life by the power of Her Kṛṣṇa *prema*. Even though they fanned Radha with lotus and *tala* leaves and sprinkled Her with sandal water, the *priya-sakhis* could not reduce Radhika's high fever in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Luckily, Her friend named Murccha (unconsciousness) arrived to extinguish the fire.

Seeing the filaments of cotton held under Her nose moving slightly with Her breathing, the *sakhis* understood that Radha still lived. When a smart *sakhi* said, "Kṛṣṇa is coming!" Radha opened Her eyes and returned to external consciousness with great difficulty. Not seeing Kṛṣṇa, however, Radhika just stared into space. Her eyes looked like a pair of blue lotuses painted on a canvas.

Even though Radhika heard Her friends saying, "Kṛṣṇa will be coming in a moment," She thought, "If one moment becomes like one *yuga* of time, am I to blame for suffering such pains of separation?" Not seeing Kṛṣṇa before Her, Radha felt even more anguished. The hot sparks of fire in Her heart shot forth as tears, mixed with Her *kajala*, and dripped in black streams down Her golden lotus face.

Kṛṣṇa, the ocean of mercy, proceeded to the abode of Varuna. Upon seeing Him, Varuna humbly and courteously received the Lord. Filled with affection, he worshiped Kṛṣṇa with *arghya* and other articles. Varuna praised the effulgent Supreme Lord as the reservoir of all exceptional characteristics, the embodiment of all happiness, and the very form of concentrated bliss and knowledge.

Varuna-deva said, "O jewel of the womb (*garbha ratna*) of Devaki! You shine brilliantly among the *devatas* headed by Siva! I offer my respects to you. You descend as an *avatara* to relieve the earth (*ratnagarbha*) of her burden (*bharavataraka*). Your handsome form and qualities defeat the attraction of thousands of Cupids. You stand before us as the spotlessly pure and blissful son of Nanda. The dust (*raja*) of Your lotus feet has removed my covering of passion (*rajas*). All the residents of my city have now

become purified by Your auspicious presence. Today my birth has become successful.

“Due to possessing fabulous wealth, my knowledge has become covered. Therefore, I could not understand Your infallible position as the master of Maya and the controller of all-devouring time. O Madhava! O creator of all the universes! You should not keep men like me blinded by Your illusory potency. Even the best *muni* cannot surpass Your Maya. O killer of Aghasura! You have all desirable characteristics! Though my servants think themselves very clever, they do not have a drop of intelligence. They have committed a terrible act by bringing your father here. Yet at the same time, they have bestowed a great boon upon me.

“Indeed, I offended You, who are so rarely attained by anyone in this world. Due to pride, I violated the rules of conduct. By keeping the dust of Your lotus feet as the crown jewel on my head, however, I may nullify the poisonous fever caused by my severe offense. O Lord of lords! Your splendid complexion easily conquers the glistening trunk of a young *tamala* tree. Siva, the father of Kartikeya, and all the demigods worship You, whose eyes are beautiful lotus petals, who has a splendidly contoured belly, who radiates a dazzling effulgence, whose graceful arms extend to Your knees, and who wears a gorgeous forest garland. I worship that superexcellent transcendental form.”

After praising Kṛṣṇa, Varuna took sweet, fragrant water in his hands and washed the Lord’s lotus feet, which are the abode of auspiciousness. This immediately removed all calamities. Varuna said, “O Supreme Person! O subduer of the demons! Please be merciful to me. Please take whatever jewels You want from my kingdom. Actually, everything here belongs to You. What more can I say? I also belong to You.

“All my pious acts have borne fruit by receiving Your *darsana*. If the desire to see You arises within a person, it will not disappear all of a sudden. Therefore, just to taste the bliss of seeing You, I have safely kept Your father here. O ornament of the earth! Please forgive my offense. Though the servant may be forgiven, the master should be punished for the offense of his servant. So I deserve severe punishment for this act.” Having given up his false pride, Varuna folded hands and stood meekly before the Lord.

Kṛṣṇa compassionately said, “O lord of the waters! I am pleased with your motives and the statements of your love for Me. Keep whatever wealth you have. Although I have come from a distant place, because you are My devotee, this is also My residence.” After speaking a few immeasurably sweet words, the son of the king of Vṛndavana, placed His father in front and calmly went home.

All directions erupted with an auspicious uproar upon Kṛṣṇa’s return to Vṛndavana. The minds of Radhika and the *gopis* submerged in anxiety and simultaneously floated in liquid currents of nectar. Somehow the *gopis* quickly revived Radha, and everyone filled with boundless happiness.

Showing Brahman to the Vrajavasis

Nanda Maharaja entered a state of confusion after having seen the immense opulence of Varuna’s city, the respect he showed Kṛṣṇa, and after hearing Varuna’s praise of his son. With great animation Vrajaraja Nanda explained all his experiences to the Vrajavasis. Although the cowherd men felt happy to hear this, they also felt grave. Without a doubt, they thought that this cowherd boy Kṛṣṇa must be the Lord of the universe described in the scriptures.

During this exchange, they wondered whether Kṛṣṇa would show them His great, unlimited aspect as the effulgent impersonal *Brahman*. Knowing their desires, Kṛṣṇa decided to bestow His mercy. To make them realize that the personal form of *Brahman* is more blissful than the impersonal *Brahman*, Kṛṣṇa temporarily deprived them the taste of *prema*. Kṛṣṇa wanted to remove any doubts that the Vrajavasis had about their future destination. Covering their knowledge with the darkness of illusion, Kṛṣṇa showed them the brilliant impersonal *Brahman*.

In the *Brahman*, the *gopas* could neither taste the bliss of directly fondling Kṛṣṇa, nor experience the lack of bliss by not fondling Him. The *gopas* felt pained on being deprived of their previous realization of Kṛṣṇa. Out of compassion, Kṛṣṇa removed their bewilderment and withdrew the *Brahman* effulgence. Then He revealed the Vaikuntha planets, which are full of auspiciousness, ever increasing bliss, and free from all anxieties.

After binding them up in the witch called liberation, Kṛṣṇa removed the illusion from His loving devotees. By this Kṛṣṇa showed that His devotees

do not attain the painful liberation desired by others. As if awakening from a trance, the Vrajavasis beheld the pleasing Vaikuntha realm that is situated far beyond the modes of material nature. They considered, “Is it possible to hear, touch, smell, or perceive anything in Vaikuntha?”

Although they had experienced merging in the impersonal *Brahman* and the happiness of Vaikuntha, when they realized that they could not see the face of Kṛṣṇa, whose sweetness surpasses all, they felt a moment without Him to be like a thousand *yugas*. Without the joy of Kṛṣṇa’s association, they felt like miserable wretches without any shelter. In order to dissipate their suffering and renew their happiness, Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of *rasa* and cause of all causes, withdrew that vision of Vaikuntha and revealed His sweet personal form in Vṛndavana.

Seeing Kṛṣṇa before them, the Vrajavasis drowned in waves of pleasure. They realized that Kṛṣṇa’s ever-fresh and enchanting Vṛndavana pastimes on earth far surpassed the bliss and wonder of merging in the impersonal *Brahman* or attaining Vaikuntha. On the other hand, those philosophers, whose intelligence is infected with bad logic and arguments, have great difficulty understanding the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa. What to speak of miscreants who can neither search for nor attain the Lord.

Simply with a wink, Kṛṣṇa showed the impersonal *Brahman* to the residents of Vṛndavana. Seeing this as an obstacle to their loving devotion, Kṛṣṇa immediately withdrew it. Therefore, what is impossible for His *lila-sakti*?

Chapter Seventeen: The Rasa Dance Begins

After breaking the pride of all the *devatas* headed by Brahma, Kṛṣṇa conquered the god of love. Seeing the beautiful full moon night of the *sarad* season, Kṛṣṇa desired to enjoy the *rasa* dance. In this transcendental pastime, Kṛṣṇa tested the enchanting power of His coveted companion the flute, embraced all the young *gopis* in His arms, and relished the pure love of the Vraja *kumaris*, who had previously worshiped Katyayani without deviation.

By this time, the Vraja *kumaris*' attraction to Kṛṣṇa flowed like a rushing stream of nectar. The fruit of their *prema* had been maturing from the day that Kṛṣṇa accepted them. Understanding that their *prema* had ripened, Kṛṣṇa thought, "Tonight I will enjoy *rasa-lila* with My dearest Radhika, the *gopis*, and all of these young girls." To facilitate His pastime, He lengthened the night to the equal the duration of Brahma's night.

He strengthened the determination of the young girls who had been kept in their parents' houses on previous nights. On that night, the young girls, being maddened with the desire to please Kṛṣṇa, easily overcame all obstacles and took shelter of the forest. Those effulgent, well-behaved young *gopis*, whom He had already accepted, quickly ran into the forest. Seeing them standing before Him like the presiding deities of the full moon night, eager to satisfy His desires, Kṛṣṇa said, "You have come here with great endeavor."

After saying this, Kṛṣṇa thought how to keep His promise to them. Knowing their intentions and Kṛṣṇa's desire to enjoy intimate pastimes with them, Yogamaya, the Lord's own internal potency, made all necessary arrangements. The nights in which Kṛṣṇa enjoyed His *rasa-lila* surpassed the splendor of the spring, summer, and autumn seasons combined. The best flowers of those three seasons simultaneously bloomed and inundated the forest with incomparable aromas. The pleasing, indistinct sounds of cuckoos vibrated in all directions. The south wind blew gently carrying the fragrance of honey-laden *madhavi* blossoms. Swarms of intoxicated young bees moved among the *mallika* creepers drinking the nectar from the half-

opened blossoms. Their loud buzzing resembled the trumpeting conchshell of the spring festival. Lazy herons and love-crazed ducks swam about in the various lakes. Bees played in the blooming clumps of lotus flowers.

The bright full moon rose quickly and moved into position for its service. Rising in the pink sky, it looked like a round dye tub for Cupid to color the cloth of the hearts of young men and women. It looked like a golden earring reflected on the passion-flushed cheeks of the goddess of fortune. The rising moon appeared like a copper clock in the sky announcing the time for relishing the sweet *rasa* dance. The moon appeared like the blissful face of the wife of Indra, the Lord of the eastern direction.

As the moon, anxious to see Kṛṣṇa, continued rising, it turned yellow in color like fresh sprouts. Millions of stars twinkled attractively in the clear autumn sky. The moon appeared like a swan dyed yellow from touching the pollen of the golden lotus flowers growing in the lakes of the eastern direction. It appeared like an offering of butter churned from the ocean of yogurt by the embodiment of time.

As the moon continued its upward journey, it turned more and more white in color. It looked like a white pavilion of the king of seasons supported by the ropes of its fine rays. Just as lovers burning in separation often look through half-closed eyes, similarly, at this time due to its brilliant rays, one could only view the moon through squinting eyes. The full moon looked like a plump white dove sitting in his nest of the sky fixed in the pavilion of the universe.

The moon and its spots looked like a crystal box with reflections of *betel* nuts on it. But if you say that a crystal box does not move, then we say that the moon appears like a sparkling silver boat crossing the ocean of the sky under the direction of the captain of time. If you say that the spots on the moon make it inauspicious, then we say that it is still beautiful and auspicious. It is just like a silver pot decorated with ornamental leaves belonging to the bride of the night.

The moon glitters like the diamond earring of the playful Lord Balarama. It is like an egg produced by the swan of fame of the autumn season. The moon is like a cool, soft pillow to relieve Cupid's fever caused by his own pride. It is like a *malati mala* tied in the hair of the spotless effulgence of

the goddess of twilight. This indicates that chaste women worship the moon. Against the dark blue sky the white moon appears like the Pancajanya conchshell hanging on the darkened body of Visnu. It is the silver umbrella of Cupid. Materialists are satisfied with the successful harvests produced by its nourishing rays.

It looks like a splendid crystal bowl holding *ghee* for a *yajna*. The moon, situated in the milky ocean of the sky, is like an oyster-shell box filled with priceless pearls. It is the looking glass of the goddess of auspiciousness, the *candana tilaka* on the maiden of the night, or a city of camphor to soothe the eyes. The beautiful full moon appears like a huge white lotus floating in a lake of bliss, a pile of foam on the ocean of sweetness, or the palace of the goddess of beauty.

The full moon looks like a sandy bank of the Akash Ganga (milky way). Just as love-intoxicated cuckoos are always ornamented with sweet cooing, the moon is decorated with fifteen attractive phases. Just as a pious king is endowed with treasures collected from His circle of followers, the moon possesses an orb of radiance. Just as Rama always accompanies Laksmana and the *sarasa* bird always stays with his wife, similarly, the moon always exists with its spots. Just as a devotee removes misery and gives joy to the earth, the moon relieves suffering and gives happiness. Just as a *sadhu's* good instructions act as medicine to cure a person's faulty intelligence, similarly, the moon gives herbs and plants as medicines to cure all diseases.

Just as Kamadeva stimulates desires, the moon increases mutual attraction. As a man of discrimination destroys the darkness of ignorance, the moonlight removes the darkness from the earth. As Sugriva is the master of his wife named Tara, similarly, the moon is the lord of the stars (*tara*). Though the ocean is always filled with sharks and snakes (*sada ahi makara*), the moon is always full of cooling rays (*sada hema kara*). In this way, the moon, replete with all good qualities and auspiciousness, illuminated Vrndavana with its rays of light.

In the splendid *sarad* season the king of the stars gradually rose to the top of the sky. The moonlight filtering through the leaves and creepers created a wonderful combination of shading and lighting. The moon rays seemed to be coming through a sieve and spreading in a thousand pencil rays across

the forest floor. Acting as a skillful light designer, the moon produced a perfect atmosphere for the auspicious *rasa* dance.

The moon hung from the umbrella of the sky, which was embellished with the pearl-like stars. The effulgent rays of the moon seemed like the filaments of a huge *camara* belonging to the demigods. The moon resembled a white lotus flower strung on a white silk thread through the center of an umbrella of pearls formed by the stars in the sky. Eager to enliven the earth, the moon emanated a unique radiance, which soothed and satisfied the minds of the people, and churned the hearts of all beautiful ladies. The intoxicating nectar of the full moon maddened the world with desire.

Encouraged by the splendor of the full moon, Kṛṣṇa took shelter of His effulgent, all-enchanting flute. Endowed with matchless fame, Kṛṣṇa's flute pleases the minds of everyone, and forcibly attracts the young *gopis* of Vrndavana. Without making any distinctions that flute enthuses everyone in heaven and earth. Though Kṛṣṇa's flute has the power to attract all living entities, by the will of the Lord only certain ones such as the deer, cows, birds, and young *gopis* can hear it.

Seeing the rising moon, Kṛṣṇa vibrated captivating tunes on His sweet *murali*. Hearing it, each *gopi* thought that Kṛṣṇa called her alone. As they absorbed themselves in the blissful vibration, the *gopis* became oblivious to all other sounds. Manifesting its own personality, the flute sound transcended all obstacles and impediments in order to bring supreme fortune to the *gopis*. The flute's sweet song uprooted the *gopis'* hearts, drank up their intelligence, liquidated their self-control, and blurred their vision. Their minds entered a state of insanity and their bodies shook in ecstasy. They thought only of the path leading to Kṛṣṇa. The flute sounded a deathblow to proper conduct and family reputation. It was the *Agama sastra* for destroying one's patience and self-control.

It cast an unbreakable spell upon the Vraja *gopis*. Suffering intense pains of lust from hearing the seductive calling of Kṛṣṇa's *murali*, the *gopis* desired only to meet Kṛṣṇa. Though soft and sweet, the sound of the flute acted like a mad elephant intent on enjoying his pastimes. Showing great skill, he broke through the fences of their families, destroyed their self-restraint, and turned the innocent young girls into wanton ladies.

The flute sound created extraordinary effects when it touched the ears of that excellent *gopi* Radhika. It turned Her into an intoxicated person. Becoming dizzy, Radharani lost all shyness and self-control. Her intelligence bewildered; She uttered nonsense words. This state of intoxication differed from the type caused by wine, which reddens the eyes. Radhika's eyes did not turn red from the intoxicating sound of the flute, but they filled with tears instead. But will the eyes not become red from wiping away the tears of love?

The sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute is the joy of all joys, the secret of all secrets, the festival of all festivals, and the impeller of all impellers to force one to meet with Him. Upon hearing their own names blended in the melody of Kṛṣṇa's flute, the Vraja *kumaris*, though far away from Kṛṣṇa, felt very close to their object of love. Although they had no prior arrangement for a rendezvous, and though engaged in their daily chores, all the *gopis* at once decided to go to Kṛṣṇa. Immediately upon hearing the dancing notes of the flute, the *gopis* left the village of Vṛndavana. They moved as if under the influence of a malefic star, or like puppets strung on a single thread, or rain falling from a cloudless sky. Their irrepressible *prema* flashed like lightning within them. The unexpected appearance of their cherished object of love baffled their intelligence.

The *gopis* resembled golden creepers that had been broken and thrown into a lake of intense attraction. They looked like land lotuses crushed by the intoxicated elephants of their desires. Verily, they existed as the embodiments of loving hankering. Due to their acute longing for Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* lost all fear of criticism. The young girls looked immensely beautiful with their earrings swinging as they moved hastily along the path. They totally concentrated on the object of their desire. Pursuing the sound of the flute, they appeared like golden lights shaking in the wind, or flames spreading light in all directions.

The *sadhana siddha gopis* (*sruti-caris* & *muni-caris*) were one group among the many famous Vraja *gopis* attending the *rasa* dance. These *gopis* happily spent their days obeying their parents and performing their daily duties. But upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute song, they immediately abandoned their engagements of cooking, milking cows, fetching water and so on. That

alluring sound made them fly in the sky on the wings of their anxious hearts. Some *gopis* left rice boiling on the stove and quickly went to Kṛṣṇa.

Others abruptly left the circle of their relatives and ran out to the forest path. Some lotus-eyed *gopis*, who were feeding milk to the babies of the married *gopis*, put them on the ground and raced away. The *muni-cari gopis*, who had been the sages of Dandakaranya, maintained *parakiya bhava* for Kṛṣṇa within the core of their hearts. Although carefully attending their husbands, they left them immediately upon hearing the sweet melody of Kṛṣṇa's flute. They felt each moment away from Kṛṣṇa to be like millions of years. Some of the *muni-cari gopis* were taking their evening meals and joking with their families, but upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute song they instantly stopped eating and rushed off to Kṛṣṇa.

When beckoned by the *murali*, the *sruti-cari gopis*, although having painted sandal pulp designs on only one of their breasts, fled rapidly from their houses. Forcibly attracted by the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute, the older *sruti-cari gopis* left the massaging of their maid servants aside and hastened to the forest without even buttoning their blouses.

If the *sadhana siddha gopis* felt such affliction, one can just imagine the condition of the eternal consorts of Kṛṣṇa. The *nitya-siddha gopis* possessed totally auspicious, eternal spiritual bodies. Permeated with joy, all their limbs longed for the sweet festival of Kṛṣṇa's loving embrace. In their anxiety to meet Kṛṣṇa they dressed and ornamented themselves in haphazard ways. They fastened their necklaces on their waists, diamond belts on their chests, anklets on their arms, and bracelets on their ankles. They set their hip ornaments in their hair and their hair ornaments on their hips. Losing all sense of reality, the *gopis* applied *kajala* to only one eye, *alta* to one foot, and *kunkuma* to one breast. In this condition, their bodies looked even more attractive, and clearly indicated their hearts' burning desire for Kṛṣṇa.

Some *gopis* draped their upper garments around their legs, and their under garments on their arms. It appeared their limbs behaved as two close friends exchanging clothes with each other. They tied their sashes around their ankles. As they walked, the tassels on the ends of these sashes slid along on the ground. The *gopis* looked like freed elephants dragging their chains

behind them. Some *gopis* held their untied sashes in their lotus-bud hands as they ran excitedly down the footpath to meet Kṛṣṇa.

An excited *gopi*, who had applied wet *lac* dye to only one foot, stained one side of the path as she raced down the path to Kṛṣṇa. The young *gopis* appeared as beautiful as Parvati, the daughter of the Himalayas. With their veils flapping in the pleasant breeze, the gorgeous bodies of the *gopis* seemed like moving flags of Cupid, advertising their willingness to submit to Kṛṣṇa. The tinkling of anklets tied on one foot appeared to be talking to a mute, since their constant clatter met no response from the other foot. Their armlets haphazardly placed on only one arm made their arms look more beautiful and auspicious. Even a branch from a celestial tree could not compare with the loveliness of their limbs.

Though the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute entered both ears, some of the *gopis* hung earrings on only one ear. They could not be blamed for this mistake caused by the flute. After infatuating their hearts the flute song goaded them quickly on the path to their beloved. Shot by the arrow of Cupid, their minds reeled in agitation and their throats choked from the rapid expulsion of their life airs. Swelling with expectancy and desire, the *gopis* hastily left their houses. They looked like prisoners released from a life sentence as they happily hurried into the forest. Darting here and there, the restless glances of the *gopis* looked like a shower of blue lotus petals initiating the festival of meeting Kṛṣṇa.

Although desirous, some groups of *gopis* could not meet Kṛṣṇa. The husbands of the married *rsi-cari gopis* prevented them from leaving the village. The *sruti-cari gopis*, previously the personified *Upanisads*, were kept home by their fathers, brothers and friends. Posing as well-wishers, these relatives acted as their greatest enemies. Some of these *gopis*, however, who burned with attraction for Govinda, could not be stopped by anyone. Of course, no one could stop the all-worshipable *nitya-siddha gopis* who forever display the highest degree of ecstatic love, *mahabhava*.

There are two types of love seen in the *rsi-cari gopis*. Those *gopis* who had attained perfection in their love for Kṛṣṇa after intense practice encountered no impediments in meeting the Lord. Other *gopis* who had not quite perfected their love of Kṛṣṇa could not get out of their houses. Even though they used ladders to escape from their houses, their cruel husbands still

stopped them. Tolerating the obstructions caused by their own imperfection, these unfortunate *gopis* entered a deep state of meditation on Kṛṣṇa. Such mental absorption brought them inconceivable good fortune. Seeing that they could not go to the forest with all their friends, they felt totally useless and burned with unbearable sorrow in separation from Kṛṣṇa. This repentant mood exhausted their bad *karmas* and freed them from all material contamination.

By fully surrendering to Kṛṣṇa they no longer felt the unhappiness caused by depending on their husbands and friends. As the materiality of their bodies diminished to nil, they experienced *pralaya* (devastation or the final stage of developed emotions). Now that their *karmic* bonds were cut, they gave up their bodies made of the three qualities of material nature, just as a snake casts off its old skin. To attain the direct association of Kṛṣṇa, who is sought throughout the *Vedas*, they received gorgeous spiritual bodies endowed with all auspicious attributes meant for serving the Lord. Immediately, they joined the *nitya-siddha gopis* and blissfully approached Kṛṣṇa. Thus they achieved Kṛṣṇa's association without giving up their bodies or taking another birth.

It is not surprising that those with strong desires for material enjoyment cannot attain liberation. Spiritual desires, however, are of a different nature. Though spiritual desires are indestructible, they have the power to completely destroy one's material qualities. By desiring to serve the Lord the *gopis* received non-material bodies. Without following any other process, these *gopis* proved that attraction to Kṛṣṇa is the greatest power in the universe.

Seeing the approaching *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa, the younger brother of Balarama who embodies all arts, decided to bewilder them by acting deceptively. Dressed in shimmering yellow cloth, Kṛṣṇa stood in an attractive three-fold bending form on the bank of the Yamuna. Kṛṣṇa spoke to discourage the *gopis* with His words while simultaneously encouraging them with the hidden meaning of His language.

Noticing the joy and anticipation on their faces, Kṛṣṇa said, "Please come! Welcome! All good fortune to you! What can I do for you? Why have you come here? Why don't you speak?"

Seeing their worried countenances, He continued, “O lotus-eyed girls! You seem to be wandering about as if still trapped in your houses. If you say that you have come here out of curiosity, I cannot believe you because of your disarrayed clothing. It is not proper for women to look so odd in public. Your beautiful ornaments are all in the wrong places on your bodies. It seems you have decorated yourselves in a thoughtless way.

“O lotus-eyed girls, I am worried that your health is in great danger. By running here so hastily, you appear on the brink of exhaustion. The drops of perspiration hanging from your earrings seem like pearls. The artful designs on your foreheads have become smeared. Due to heavy breathing your soft lips appear dried out and your bodices are heaving.”

Reading their minds, Kṛṣṇa spoke more frankly, “Has something disastrous happened? If it had, your wanton actions would have made your husbands unhappy. How am I to tell whether your actions are beneficial or harmful? Did you half-ornament your bodies for fun? Or is everything disarrayed due to your haste and longing to see Me?

“Actually it is not possible for someone trapped in a cave to suddenly come out independently. I doubt your husbands gave you permission to go to the forest. Maybe you *gopis* have come because of your desire to enjoy independently. But how could that be, because this is not the proper time for pleasure. Just see the inauspicious twilight is quickly approaching! The forest is full of dangerous beasts. I feel no fear, but this is no place for women to look for fun. It is certainly astonishing that you have fearlessly come here. Please listen to Me. It will be better for you to immediately leave this place.”

[There are inner meanings to the words Kṛṣṇa speaks here to the *gopis*. These hidden meanings reveal Kṛṣṇa’s heartfelt intentions to enjoy with His eternal consorts. For example, in the previous section Kṛṣṇa means to say, “There is no cause to fear this forest. In Vṛndavana there are no ferocious and dangerous animals. Whether I am alone or with others, this forest gives great pleasure. Since You have come to Me, You should have no fear of this forest. Therefore, I recommend that you stay here with Me.”]

Kṛṣṇa: “O restless-eyed *gopis*! Perhaps you have come here with a desire to see the forest flowers and smell their fragrance.”

[Kṛṣṇa really means, “Smelling the natural fragrance of your bodies has excited My attraction. Now I do not know what will happen by looking at you. Although you have seen the forest, you have not seen the creepers in detail. Now listen to Me and understand all these things.”]

Kṛṣṇa: “Look! It seems that the intoxicated bees, humming within the flowering creepers, are criticizing you like close friends. Therefore, you should not stay here but go back to your homes. With their smiling flowers the trees are also hinting that you should go home.”

[Here Kṛṣṇa means to say, “The bees are criticizing you for returning to your houses. Though you desire to leave this place, the trees are preventing you with their flower smiles.”]

Kṛṣṇa: “Look! The rays of light passing through the leaves of the trees and mixing with the shade at their bases look so picturesque. The birds, mistaking them for sesame seeds, are pecking at those spots of light. O! Look there! Vṛndavana is fragrant with sandalwood trees and filled with the drawn out sounds of cuckoos. The gentle wind carries the sweet scent of blue lotuses picked up from embracing the waves of the Yamuna. Though the deep forest is very attractive on account of its variety of trees and songbirds, it is not proper for women to come here alone in the dead of night to see them. You should accept my words, go serve your husbands, and respect your in-laws. Therefore go back to Vraja!”

[Kṛṣṇa intends to say, “It is good that you have come here to see the forest. Now just stay here with Me and do not go back to Vraja.”]

After speaking to the married ladies, Kṛṣṇa addressed the unmarried *gopis*, “O young girls with beautiful smiles, please hear Me! The helpless babies, and the young boys and girls are crying at home. Go feed them, milk the cows, and let the calves drink their fill. Do not let your broad intelligence fall into illusion.”

[The inner meaning here is, “Do not go feed the children or milk the cows, and do not have doubts about My fulfilling all your cherished desires.”]

Then Kṛṣṇa spoke to all the *gopis*; “Your mothers, fathers, brothers and husbands are looking for you everywhere. Therefore You must return home. Do not pretend to be ignorant by saying, ‘We do not know anything.’ ”

[Kṛṣṇa is really saying, “You should not fall into illusion and forget your desired goal. Please stay here and realize all your desires.”]

Kṛṣṇa continued, “Please go! Do not stand here any longer! O lotus-eyed *gopis*! I do not know why you are not moving from this forest. Why did you come here in the first place? If you intended to see Me, then it has already been fulfilled. You can see Me at any time. It is not right that chaste women like yourselves see Me like this.”

[Here Kṛṣṇa intends to say, “Do not leave My forest grove but stay here a long time. O lotus-eyed *gopis*! If you ask the reason for your coming here, then I will tell you. You think I do not know your motives? I know everything. Just by seeing you I am not satisfied, so we must engage in more confidential affairs. If a person comes to you out of attraction, it is wrong to ask him to leave.”]

Kṛṣṇa: “Direct association with Me does not give as much pleasure as meditating upon Me, hearing about Me, and seeing My Deity form. Therefore You should go home. O lotus-eyed *gopis*! It is not proper for persons such as you to steal love from someone like Me.”

[The inner meaning here is, “Direct association with Me is far superior to meditating upon Me, hearing about Me, or seeing My Deity form. Therefore do not go! O lotus-eyed girls, just stay with Me and plunder My love.”]

Kṛṣṇa: “O all-attractive *gopis*, you should not renounce your service to your husbands. You are all following the path of morality. Women who love their husbands should not act like persons addicted to sin.”

[The inner meaning is, “The service you are giving to your husbands should be rendered to Me. Now that I have seen you, I have lost interest in anything else. Since you desire Me only and not your husbands, you should not reject Me.”]

Kṛṣṇa: “A intelligent woman should never reject her husband even if he is full of faults, misbehaved, deaf, dumb, diseased, penniless, or like a vine dropping all its flowers and about to die. What to speak of a husband who is faultless. Certainly, he can never be given up. This is law of the *Vedas* and the common tradition. Your pure character is imbued with these two norms of conduct, yet you stand here fearlessly. Attraction to a man other than

one's husband is always dangerous. It is contrary to both norms. Besides bringing defamation, it is condemned, especially for persons like you."

[inner meaning, "Since you are adhering to both standards on this extraordinary night, you are safe and should stay here with Me. The attraction you have for Me will give peace of mind and deliver you from all fear. You will not be criticized at all because you are not acting against any principles."]

Kṛṣṇa: "A proper wife has only one husband, and should not even look at another man. Chaste women do not do what you are now doing. Respecting My words, you should accept this beneficial instruction and immediately leave this forest."

[inner meaning, "Ordinary women cannot even see Me, the best of husbands, what to speak of touching Me! Nothing in the universe can compare with your good fortune. Now follow My instructions and do not go home!"]

In this way, Kṛṣṇa, the full moon of all sixty-four arts, stood beautifully bedecked with a garland as He tested the *gopis*' love with His clever riddles. His outer remarks directly opposed His inner motives. Kṛṣṇa's speaking resembled the autumn season where one gets relief from the hot sun by entering the cool water of a deep lake. Kṛṣṇa's behavior resembled a jackfruit, which is externally rough and prickly, but sweet inside, or like a juicy coconut with a hard shell.

Knowing His nature, one should not give up thinking that He is too difficult to attain. The intelligent and determined person can easily penetrate His hard shell and taste the delicious interior. Kṛṣṇa resembles a banana flower that is soft and sweet within but hard on the outside. Fearing the hard skin, one should not abandon the honey nectar within.

One should bear whatever hardships come from external causes. Just like a *saskuli pistaka* sweetmeat, Kṛṣṇa concealed His soft interior with a rough exterior. Whether for testing or joking, such instructions are always perfect when coming from the master of comedy. Through the special usage of words, Kṛṣṇa conveyed His inner attraction and attachment to the *gopis* with external expressions such as, "Welcome, welcome," "It is wrong to be attracted to other men," and "You should go."

Kṛṣṇa spoke in a tricky way with the *gopis* in order to solve a difficult problem. He wanted to create unity among the opposing parties of Radha and Candravali so that everyone could fully taste the *rasa*. Superficially He seemed indifferent, but within He relished the essence of sweetness. Blinded by their attachment, the *gopis* only took the outer meaning. They could not perceive the hidden reality of His words.

As their prospects for pleasure dried up, the *gopis*' suffering reached intolerable proportions. On hearing Kṛṣṇa's disheartening words, the *gopis* felt as if they were stabbed by a million swords, stung by scorpions, bitten by black snakes, burnt by raging fires, cut by lethal razors, afflicted by high fevers, pierced by spears, or poisoned in every limb of their bodies. The whole planet seemed empty, the three worlds hopeless, the universe devoid of bliss, the directions burned with pain, and the earth was a tasteless pile of ashes. They felt like they were dying a slow death.

In those difficult moments, they lost consciousness and appeared like dolls made only of hard bones. Within a few minutes they recovered from fainting with the help of the goddess of consciousness. But due to the emotions swirling in their hearts, they were hurled into an even more extreme state of suffering. Tears streamed from their eyes, their faces faded, their lips trembled, and drops of perspiration formed on their cheeks. They breathed erratically, their limbs hung limply, and their beautiful armlets slipped off their arms.

The *gopis* felt ashamed of their love since they did not give up their lives after hearing their lover's indifferent words. Having accepted Kṛṣṇa as their one and only shelter, they now wanted to enter the lowest planet out of shame. They drew lines on the ground with the toes of their lotus feet that shined like brilliant five-pronged engraving instruments.

The life airs of the *gopis*, which were already fragile by nature, were now broken to pieces by the axe of Kṛṣṇa's harsh words. Although immensely disturbed, their life airs could not escape because vapor blocked their throats. As this vapor condensed, it poured from their eyes as tears. Dead silent, the *gopis* looked like figures painted on the canvas of the sky.

The *halahala* poison of suffering, incapable of being contained within the *gopis*' throats, dripped out of the doors of their eyes as tears mixed with

their *kajala*. Astonishingly, those tears disappeared when they fell upon their tortured breasts. Did those tears enter their hearts that were previously poisoned by the loss of their life airs? The hot breath rushing out of their noses wilted their flower garlands and the delicate flower petals of their lips.

Tears, stained black with *kajala* and looking like juice squeezed from the essence of beauty, fell incessantly from the lotus faces of the grief stricken *gopis*. Somehow this did not discolor their nose pearls. Although their nose pearls resembled drops of liquid beauty, they did not fall like their tears. Like seeds they waited to produce the fruits of *prema rasa*.

Eager to reveal their individual emotional moods of pride or submission, and to transform the anxiety of love, the *gopis* replied to Kṛṣṇa. Like the sweet humming of bees mad to taste the honey of His face, the *gopis* tried repeatedly to convey their exact desires. Filling the darkness with the sparkle of their blackened tears, some submissive *gopi* group leaders such as Bhadra spoke quietly conveying their sadness.

Padma and other submissive leaders, who have rows of radiantly white bud-like teeth, darkened the night with their half-closed eyes that seemed like blind bees supported by the fragrance of their faces. They spoke impudently to Kṛṣṇa. Some bold *sakhis* like Visakha spoke sweet words with ornamental intonation. Her words, saturated with intense attraction, escaped the comprehension of Sarasvati.

Creating a forest of blue lotus flowers in the sky with their furtive glances, and clusters of golden lotuses with their forms, some bold leaders like Radhika spoke with ferocious anger. Overcome with pride and possessiveness, Radhika, Lalita, and Syama, their eyes reddened and their faces sprinkled with hot drops of perspiration, spoke to Madhava in an angry mood.

The beautiful Candravali and other submissive *sakhis* hesitatingly divulged their strong desires in soft voices full of entreaty. Their breasts moistened with blackened tears, some of the Vraja *kumaris* like Dhanya-sakhi, spoke in choked voices due to their infatuation and uncontrollable attraction for Kṛṣṇa.

Gopi Gita

As much as possible we will try to present what each of the distraught *gopis* spoke to reveal their natural sentiments. Of course, even Brhaspati, the *guru* of the *devatas*, would not attempt such a task, which requires realization of *srngara-rasa*, the highest form of transcendental love. O *rasika Vaisnavas*! Please do not make fun of my boldness. This is an attempt to curb the pride of the so-called scholars of *rasa*. I commit no offense in doing so, for though a person may be very unqualified, insignificant, and prematurely eager, he can still aspire to taste that rarest sweet substance of love.

The most beautiful of all the *gopis* spoke first. “Alas, O Kṛṣṇacandra! You should not deliberately hurl us into lamentation with your harsh words, which burn our hearts like a painful ulcer. To please the earth, the cloud showers rain not poison. Your words are illogical and senseless. When it gets a chance to drink water from a cloud, even a lowly *cataki* bird gives up his friends and relatives just as one vacates a dark hole.”

Though angry, some other *gopis* spoke pleasing words in a humorous tone. “You have taught us that the proper duty of a woman is to serve her husband, sons and friends. As a *sikṣa-guru*, may You keep that instruction to Yourself. For Your teaching does not apply to women like us.”

[As Kṛṣṇa previously spoke with hidden meanings, the *gopis* also have inner meanings to their statements given here. The inner meaning to the previous sentence is “First, You lure us innocent girls into a lonely forest at night. And then You act like a *guru*, giving instructions about duty.”]

Then Kṛṣṇa replies, “Are you telling a hidden joke?”

The *gopi* responds, “This is not a joke!”

One *gopi* said, “O Madhusudana! The aspersions You cast on us are simply comical. Who is the lord of one who rejects her husband? You could say that the son of another wife would take that role. But we will never accept that, O lord of all creation. O ocean of perfect qualities, whose feet are worshipped by Lakṣmi, You are the real master of all women. No one but You can kill the enemy of our mental anguish.”

Another *gopi* said, “O dear one! Any intelligent person is attracted you, the soul of the three worlds. What intelligent woman will worship her husband, sons, or friends, who are merely temporal beings producing various

miseries? Worshiping You is the best path both for a simple or cultured person.

“O remover of misery! You manifest unlimited variety in Your personality. You alone attract our minds and should be our master. In comparison with You, the sweetest nectar means nothing to us. Be pleased with us, for those who have surrendered unto You should not lose spirit and sink into lamentation. We have come to You in the prime of our youth. Do not cut down the tender creepers of our desires which are as fresh as lotus petals covered with dew.”

Someone else said, “O Hari! After stealing our hearts You have brought us here. How can we return to Vraja? O Lord, our feet refuse to move one step from Your lotus feet. O gallant thief! It is not proper for You to create a drought, for it will dry up the crops of dignity in the minds of the married women.”

One other *gopi* said, “Wash off the dirt of this duplicitous joking. Sprinkle nectar on our lips, which are burning like fire and as red as ripe *bimba* fruits. Quickly extinguish the fire caused by Your cruel, exasperating words. By giving up our bodies in the fire of disappointment, which were kindled by the wood of Your indifference toward us because of our improper desires, we will receive new bodies to attain Your association. Then You will repent for murdering innocent women. In any case, whether we are accepted or rejected by You, we will experience suffering because of the fear of separation from You.”

Some other *gopi* said, “O one crowned with a peacock feather! Since we have already felt unlimited bliss from touching Your lotus feet once before, we have no attraction for any other man. You are eternally situated as the perfect form and shelter of matchless beauty. We attained so much pleasure upon meeting You that we cannot think of touching another person. Therefore please accept us! After crossing the material realm in order to enjoy with You, we do not deserve to suffer in agony. Being dear to the residents of Vrndavana, You should protect Your loving servants.”

In the mood of reverential servants, the *sruti-cari gopis* said, “In this Vrndavana, married women are attracted to Your lotus feet, just as Laksmi-devi in Vaikuntha, though situated on Your chest, must compete with

Tulasi-devi to worship You. O deliverer of distressed and surrendered souls, do not abandon us!”

Having similar desires, the *muni-cari gopis* said, “O ocean of mercy! We left our houses and came to You. Be pleased with us, whose minds are agitated due to the intoxicating bliss of tasting the petals of Your lotus feet. O crest-jewel of all men! You have purchased us with Your reddish lips, sparkling smile, pleasing youthful appearance, and Your nectarean words, which have the power to destroy any amount of pain. Now engage us in Your service. Our minds have become strong from receiving the merciful sidelong glances of Your reddened eyes.”

Other *gopis* with desires similar to the *sruti-cari gopis* said, “We have become very greedy to please You after seeing Your sweet lips, nectarean smile, and the swinging jeweled earrings reflected on Your cheeks. Our hankering to serve You has been further enhanced by seeing Your pink lotus hands and splendid arms which extend to Your knees, and which can deliver anyone from fear. Please restore our lives with the honey of Your sweet smile. Immediately embrace us in Your mind, as we are filled with love in the mood of Your servants.”

Then the *nitya-siddha gopis* said, “O opulent one, who bestows all auspiciousness! O jewel among men! You are the abode of all good qualities. Since You are all-attractive, what fault is there then if we are attracted to You? Upon hearing the sound of the flute, which woman in the three worlds would not become attracted? O glorious and beautiful one! Who would not be lured from their position of chastity? Who would not sacrifice their character, and give up the reputation of their family?

“Since You are the cause of all wonder in the eyes of the three worlds, the reservoir of all auspiciousness, the shelter of absolute beauty, the sweetest of the sweet, and the pleasurable object of all the endeavors of young women, even the female deer, birds and animals become struck with love and show goose bumps on their bodies upon seeing You.”

Again the *sruti gopis* spoke, “O great one! It is well known that you destroy the suffering of the inhabitants of Vrndavana. You are the origin of Narayana and the protector of the *devatas*. You cannot reject us, therefore, after we have come to You in the middle of this forest.

“O friend of the distressed! Do not be so stubborn! O ocean of mercy! Please place Your cooling lotus hands on our burning breasts and heads, and remove the pain in our hearts. Delight our minds. May You be successful in removing all of the pain from our hearts caused by Your indifference. What more can be said?”

Then Radhika’s inner circle of friends spoke to Kṛṣṇa, “After putting the bait of conjugal affairs on the hook of Your flute song, You pulled us here with the rope of Your good qualities. Then after piercing us with the rod of harsh words, You roasted us in the fire of indifference. Please tell us why You did this.”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “My dear *gopis*! I play on My flute because of the boundless nature of My bliss. It is not My fault if married women become agitated by the sound. Why are you finding faults in My flute which comes from a pure family? It is not crooked but naturally straight and free from knots throughout its length.”

The *gopis* said, “You are at fault! Because when playing the flute, You call out each of our names.”

Kṛṣṇa defends Himself by saying, “No, I do not blow into the flute at all. The wind blows through the flute by itself and makes a sound. On its own, the flute clearly calls out your names because it knows all of you.”

The *gopis* reply, “Even so, it is Your fault. As You are a respectable personality, You should not associate with this unworthy flute. The flute has many holes (faults), its limbs are hard, and it is hollow inside. Obviously Your flute is not born in a good family, and with its extremely talkative nature it ruins the reputation of others. Therefore, Your flute is not qualified to talk with cultured persons such as ourselves.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “O *gopis*! I see your great boldness in belittling the constant companion of My lotus hands. This flute is the very form of bliss and knowledge. It is the essence of all sound, the goddess of music, and the cream of the *Vedas* and *Upanisads*. Out of great love for Me, it has taken on a curious body with nine holes.”

Although the word play of Radhika’s associates had reached its limits, Kṛṣṇa, brimming with the greatest eagerness, persisted in delivering clever retorts. When the *gopis*, the perfect embodiments of *rasa*, detected a slight

smile on Kṛṣṇa's face they understood that the indifference of the crest jewel of wit had come to an end. Full of desire to enjoy, that conqueror of a thousand Cupids used the limit of intelligence to present crazy, illogical arguments.

Feeling self-satisfied, Kṛṣṇa smiled and immediately caressed the best of the *gopis*. Following the elephant of desire, He entered the midst of the *gopis* and sported here and there in the ocean of their attraction. At that time the birds loudly sang, "Victory! Victory!" The creepers smiled and the leaves of the trees stood on end. Eager to talk among their friends, the female deer gathered in groups to marvel at the scene. The joyous flowers moistened the earth with their tears of dripping nectar.

In the battle of love, the *gopis*, being completely endowed with *prema*, served as wish-fulfilling gems satisfying Kṛṣṇa's every desire for *rasa*. Being free from anger and full of all wonderful qualities, the selfless *gopis* united in friendship. Seeing Nandanandana anxious to play with the *gopis*, Vṛnda-devi and her *vanadevis*, the birds, beasts, and trees submerged in an ocean of nectarean *rasa*. It seemed they now emerged from that ocean with new bodies after having perished in the fire of separation from Kṛṣṇa.

Appearing like a powerful new cloud surrounded by a garland of lightning, Kṛṣṇa and the sweet-faced *gopis* flooded all directions with waves of bliss as they played together. Bedecked with a beautiful garland extending to His feet and fanned by the wind from buzzing bees, Damodara walked amongst the trees and creepers while the *gopis* enthusiastically praised His character with sweet voices full of love. To increase their pleasure, Yogamaya acted invisibly and inconceivably to miraculously create the perfect setting.

In great happiness, Yogamaya provided the *gopis* with dresses and ornaments just suitable for their evening pastimes in the forest. Until now the *gopis*' clothes and ornaments appeared in disarray due to hastily dressing and rushing from their homes upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's beckoning flute. Being jewels in the battle of love, they qualified to be reborn in all splendor. Ornamented in this way, Kṛṣṇa blissfully milked the *gopis*' pride.

Using His fingernail, Kṛṣṇa wrote love messages on a leaf and gave it to His beloved *sakhis*. Then He showed His expertise in personally decorating them. He picked the best flowers and creepers to make their bodices,

armlets, and other ornaments. Quickly He fashioned *malati* flower necklaces, *kadamba* forehead ornaments, *sthala padma* (land lotus) earrings, *kunda* flower chokers, and waist-belts made from *bakula*, *kesara*, and *naga-kesara* flowers. He tossed pollen over their hair, and colored their cheeks with pollen from *lodhra* flowers. Then the *gopis* decorated their cherished one. They hung *kesara* flowers on Kṛṣṇa's ears, *ketaki* flowers in His hair, and *mallika* necklaces on His chest. Some *gopis* put *asoka* flowers on His turban. Other *gopis* offered Him *yuthi* flower bangles and bracelets, and bound His belly with a belt of *bakula* flowers.

Kṛṣṇa's remarkable *rasa-lila*, which had now commenced, included four different kinds of activities—forest pastimes, lovemaking, dancing, and water sporting, which distinguished it from all other *lilas*.

In a lonely place in the forest, Kṛṣṇa relished intimate pastimes with the beautiful *gopis* of Vrndavana. As the maudlin sound of maddened bees and cuckoos echoed through the trees, the *gopis* lost themselves in Cupid's enchantment. Those beautiful ladies, whose brilliant golden complexions conquered the pride of the moonlight, merrily sprinkled Kṛṣṇa's body with fine golden pollen from white lotus flowers. The jingling of the *gopis'* bangles initiated a fresh battle of love.

Kṛṣṇa retaliated by making some flower bombs and firing them at the *gopis*. Although the *gopis* bombarded Him from all directions with flower pollen, Kṛṣṇa easily defeated them. Parrots and other birds shrieked, "Jaya! Jaya! Jaya!" to announce Kṛṣṇa's victory. Filled with a hero's pride, Kṛṣṇa then pounded Radhika and Her *sakhis* with a volley of flower bombs. But Srimati's angry sidelong glances crushed Him into submission. Then Radhika's pet *sarika* birds warbled incessantly, "We have won! We have won!"

In this way, Kṛṣṇa engaged in newer and newer pleasure pastimes at every moment. Radha plucked some fragrant, honey-filled *punnaga* flowers. When startled bees darted from the flowers, She quickly pulled back Her lotus hands and trembled in fright. Noticing this, Kṛṣṇa shouted, "Hey there! No wonder You are shaking since You have defeated the *punnaga* (best of men, or white lotuses)!" As Kṛṣṇa laughingly said this, Radhika shyly lowered Her head and smiled.

Then the clever *gopis*, piercing Kṛṣṇa's heart with the arrows of their loving glances, took the flowers they had collected for making ornaments, and pelted the Lord while shouting at Him with sweet voices. Meanwhile, Radhika stood on Her tiptoes, and stretched up Her vine-like arms to pick a special flower from a tree. Suddenly Her lower garment slipped off. As She looked nervously, Kṛṣṇa seized the opportunity to sneak up behind Radhika and lift Her up. At this, Radha blushed in embarrassment.

The intense unlimited happiness the *gopis* felt spread to the flowers. As a result, the bees went mad from the naturally sweet scent of the flowers and would not leave them. Similarly, the *gopis* became addicted to the sweet pastimes they relished with the lord of their life.

Feigning a calamity, one *gopi* said, "O some pollen has fallen in my eye!" Her bangles chimed as she pretended to rub her eye with her lotus hands. With a look of concern, Kṛṣṇa quickly approached her and said, "O no! Do not be disturbed. Let Me see!" On the pretext of blowing away the pollen, Kṛṣṇa moved close to her face and planted a tender loving kiss on her eye.

In this festival of flowers, Kṛṣṇa churned the waves of love in the hearts of those *gopis* already overcome with love. Pleased by their bold glances, Kṛṣṇa desired to enjoy with them. The perfect time had come for delighting in endless pastimes of love. When Radha tried to pick flowers beyond Her reach, the trees behaved like close friends, and bent down their branches so She could easily pluck them.

Fatigued from the flower fighting, Damodara and His band of loving *gopis* walked to the Yamuna to sport in her refreshing waters. Under the rays of the full moon, the banks of the Yamuna looked as white as fragrant camphor dust. The sandy banks were purified by the hand of Kalindi's waves and caressed by a lotus-scented breeze. Admiring the pleasant setting, Kṛṣṇa and His divine consorts wandered along the splendid banks of the Yamuna.

The brilliance of the riverbank, matching the effulgence of the lovely moonlit night, provided an ideal romantic atmosphere for a festival of love. The playful lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of sweetness, totally fearless, ever blissful, and overwhelmed in love, mingled with the different *gopi* group leaders, who murmured like affectionate parrots. Kṛṣṇa dallied

here and there in the decorative *kunjas* that sheltered various birds. Inside the flower cottages, Kṛṣṇa freely enjoyed with His beloved *gopis*, the crest jewels among all women. Far greater than either Rukmini or Laksmi, the Vraja *gopis* alone are qualified to serve that auspicious person with their auspicious bodies. Though the *gopis*' love radiated the essence of purity, Kṛṣṇa tainted their love with overwhelming passion, in order to feel the pressure of their hard breasts and experience their biting and scratching.

There are varieties of *vaidagdhi* (cleverness in love) depending on the nature and age of the individual *gopis*. This artful skill in love produced extraordinary joy in both Damodara and the *gopis*. For example, although internally the *gopis* had strong desires for Kṛṣṇa, when they spoke they denied them. The unpredictable behavior of the *gopis* manifested naturally from a mixture of their willingness to serve Kṛṣṇa and their obstinacy (*vamya-bhava* or stubborn reluctance).

Such actions as obstructing Kṛṣṇa's advances with their hands to show their shyness, casting angry glances without redness in the eyes, and crying without tears, which arose from their *vamya-bhava*, gave Kṛṣṇa immense satisfaction. The *gopis*' incessant criticisms of Kṛṣṇa hid their sweet smiles, and their knitted eyebrows communicated their false anger. In reality, these expressions revealed the intense attachment to Kṛṣṇa they held in their hearts. The *gopis* would turn away when He tried to kiss them. And they would cover their lips with their hands when He tried to drink the nectar therein. They pushed Him away when He tried to embrace them. All such displays of unwillingness actually indicated consent to their beloved.

Desiring to lock them in His heart, Kṛṣṇa surrounded the *gopis* with His long, graceful arms and forcefully embraced them one by one. Holding their braids in His left hand and raising their chins with His right hand, Kṛṣṇa lovingly gazed at their gentle bashful faces. Relaxed as a lone bee engrossed in a cluster of lotus flowers, Kṛṣṇa happily tasted the nectar of the *gopis*' lips. After being embraced and kissed by the supreme enjoyer, the *gopis*, being controlled by the joyous fragrance of intoxicated love and filled with constant delight, acted like submissive lovers.

Now Kṛṣṇa scratched their lotus-bud breasts with His fingernails, as if relieving the itch of attachment that had risen in their hearts. The breasts of the *gopis* looked more attractive when decorated with these nail marks

shining with a copper hue. Their blossoming breasts seemed like sprouts arising from the long dormant seeds of attachment sown in their hearts. Kṛṣṇa, whose touch bestows pleasure and removes all suffering, excited their beautiful limbs with the touch of His delicate petal-like fingers, which acted like a medicinal herb to cure all their afflictions.

When His lotus hand touched their breasts, it moved around in continuous circles. When His hand touched their thick braided hair, it caressed it from end to end. Coming to their waists, His hand seemed to tire from the broad expanse, and took refuge in the lake of their navels, trying to open them to reveal something within. Due to the intensity of love, the *gopis* yielded to the fickleness of their minds, gave up all shyness, and submerged in ecstasy. Washed in waves of beauty, they captivated the mind of their beloved. With their sweet, tireless, vine-like arms the *gopis* held Kṛṣṇa in a tight embrace of love strengthened by contacting His qualities.

Such playful combat is considered an aspect of *prema*. It is not contrary to conjugal *rasa*, but rather essential to it, being one of the pure ingredients of the total mixture. Immersed in this *prema rasa*, the *gopis* repeatedly kissed Kṛṣṇa with their sweetly smiling lotus faces. When Kṛṣṇa lips were surrounded by the soft lips of the *gopis* and washed by the brilliant radiance of their teeth, His face appeared like a rising moon surrounded by thirsty *cakora* birds. Overwhelmed with the highest bliss, the Kṛṣṇa bee went mad with the desire to play in the garden of creepers (the young *gopis*). He wanted to be tightly enveloped in the branches of their arms, pressed strongly by the flower buds of their breasts, and to be bruised by the thorns of their fingernails.

The *rasa-lila* cannot take place unless the minds of all the *gopis* are in harmony. To accomplish this and to make the all *gopis* of one mind through the fire of separation, Kṛṣṇa once disappeared from the assembly of His conjugal lovers. In the battle of love the *gopis* had attained the highest good fortune of tasting *madhurya-rasa* in the association of Kṛṣṇa. Thus the Vraja *gopis* showed indifference to the opulence of any women within the three worlds.

They sailed in the turbulent currents of *prema* within the river of love-madness, which is the natural habitat of the God of love. When He broke the boat of the *gopis*' confidence, they had to bail out the water of pride

from their hearts. He purposely bewildered them by His own will, as if placing them on a wheel and spinning them around. Just as badly digested food produces laziness, the *gopis*’ attainment of good fortune weakened and withered away due the intoxication of pride. In treating the disease of consumption due to pride, a person must be treated with a nourishing herbal medicine to drive away the symptoms of disease.

There is nothing to compare with the purity of a piece of white cloth. Dyeing it with the juice of the *lodhra* plant will change its color. The purity of the *gopis*’ love had been colored by the pride of love, which is unfavorable for the growth of bliss. Kṛṣṇa instantly created a situation of pain in separation, which acted as a solvent to remove the false color.

After spreading darkness amidst the moon light of the *gopis*’ bliss, and producing deadly *kalakuta* poison in the newly created milk ocean of the *gopis*’ love, Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all arts, suddenly disappeared. The thought of this happening seemed as unlikely as throwing fire on delicate filaments of saffron, or lightning striking without clouds, or the pain of a snakebite without a snake.

Thus, the *gopis* experienced this torment in their hearts, which constantly flowed with a variety of praiseworthy and pleasurable pastimes.

Chapter Eighteen: Kṛṣṇa Disappears from the Gopis

Having bound Kṛṣṇa in the core of their hearts, the *gopis* could not imagine that He had disappeared. Could it be a joke or some unbelievable event among friends? Deprived of the joy of their eyes, the *gopis* argued with each other.

“O friend! Look, some *gopi* has taken the treasure of our hearts, who is the abode of all good qualities, to her private *kunja* to make her own hasty entreaties. Like a clever thief throwing dust in our eyes, she has stolen our jewel to behold Him with her own eyes. Let us find out where she is enjoying with Him alone.”

Giving up all their fatigue, the *gopis* searched with great concentration from one bower to another. The *gopis* firmly believed that their dear most lover must be overly pleased with this *gopi*, since He had abandoned them to delight with her in a secluded grove. Influenced by pride, one *gopi* said, “I will find Him and bring Him here to enjoy with us in the same way!”

Another *gopi* said, “O, remover of distress for Your faithful devotees! The earth feels joy from the touch of Your lotus feet. You easily bewilder the wisest of men. Just for a little joking, You have hidden yourself in a bower. Why have you thrown us into such dreadful state?”

While searching for Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* meditated within themselves, “Though Kṛṣṇa shows Himself, He is actually invisible. Though He may be touched, He is untouchable. Though we are aware that He is speaking, the material ear cannot hear Him. Though He exists externally, He cannot be realized externally. Though He is the lotus of the ear, He is situated far from any ear. Though He is the ointment for the eye, He is far from any eye. Though He is like a sapphire on the breast, He is far from the breast.”

After looking for some time and not finding Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* felt doubtful and indifferent about continuing the search. Losing hope, the *gopis* stopped checking the bowers. Finding the whole world void without Kṛṣṇa, their lotus faces dried up in sadness. The forlorn *gopis* manifested a state of madness (*unmada*), which precedes the state of bewilderment (*moha*).

While seeing Kṛṣṇa in every direction, they simultaneously saw Him standing in their hearts. They touched Kṛṣṇa with their lotus hands, but He did not touch them in return. They embraced Kṛṣṇa to their chests, but He did not return the embrace. They kissed Kṛṣṇa, but He did not kiss them back.

Defeated, the *gopis* entered a pitiable state of bewilderment (*moha*). They appeared like painted dolls standing picturesquely against the sky. Their lives totally uprooted, they felt they had embraced hot coals, or that their bodies had been smeared with a deadly poison which now burned into their breasts. Their distress exceeded the pain of lemon juice poured on an open wound, a knife piercing a sensitive nerve, or a sword jabbed in the stomach. Their minds felt like dry wood sizzling in a fire, and their bodies burned with intense heat as if a venomous snake had bitten their chests. The *gopis* became deaf, blind in both eyes, and totally numb to the sense of touch. They acted as if they were mentally deranged.

The sorrow of their (*mahabhava*) devoured the ten directions. They had no shelter or support within the entire universe. It seemed darkness had enveloped all the planets. The earth cracked in half. Trees cried, creepers dried up, and all the deer burned in a forest fire.

Somehow regaining the power to speak, they conversed with one another. They appeared like statues talking by the mystic power of a ghost within. They resembled persons getting back the power of speech after hearing *mantras* to break a coma due to snakebite. The *gopis* said, “What happened? Has some clever woman taken Him as a sapphire and tied Him in her hair? Or did a powerful sadistic witch hold Him tightly and fly away with Him? How could someone suddenly snatch that living jewel from us while we drank the nectar of His elegant face with our doe-eyes?”

After posing different doubts and exhausting their intelligence, the *gopis* spoke again. “Coming to this forest, we saw the jewel among men. We mistook His harsh talks as words of compassion to facilitate the pastimes of conjugal love. Is it all a grand illusion or just a dream?”

After conjecturing like this for some time, they cleared their throats and continued, “Are we not the same *gopis*? If that is so, then by what fault of ours has this man rejected us and gone away? Is this not something

illusory? Since He has taken our minds and everything else with Him, what is the question of His being away from us? But then, who is that rascal who has created another mind and senses to give us so much pain? We cannot understand it.”

After considering various ideas they realized that Kṛṣṇa had actually disappeared. To keep themselves from giving up their lives, they entered a state of divine madness for Kṛṣṇa, which created a distance between their minds and the pain of separation. Temporary waves of solace from the ocean of madness entered the hearts of the *gopis* to alleviate their pain of separation. This provoked them to perform actions to attain Kṛṣṇa face to face.

Assuming an attractively unique condition, they imitated their previous pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. They remembered His enchanting talks, His bold actions impelled by conjugal love, and His wanton sidelong glances that defeated the beauty of lotus petals. This incomprehensible state restored life to the *gopis* who now laughed loudly like fickle bees dripping with white moonbeams of attraction to Kṛṣṇa.

Searching the Forest

Rejuvenated but agitated with love, the *gopis* moved hastily like lotuses swaying in a breeze as they looked through the groves for the Lord of their hearts. Feeling the pangs of separation from Kṛṣṇa, they sang loudly of Him as they searched for Him throughout the Vrndavana forest like a band of mad women. Invisibly, Yogamaya followed them like a shadow to prevent them from falling unconscious, or being injured by the thorns and pebbles on the forest footpaths.

Lost in the madness of Kṛṣṇa *prema*, the *gopis* inquired about Him from Vraja’s trees. They said, “O *asvattha* tree, O *kapitha*, O *kimsuka*, O *banyan*, O *pakara*, your fortune is unlimited. Please tell us, has the son of the king of the cowherds passed this way? Why are you remaining silent? Are you not cheating us? You must have seen Him, otherwise how could you be in such a stunned state, which results only from ecstatic bliss? Because of their internal absorption in Kṛṣṇa, the humble trees do not hear our request, which exists in the external word. So let us go elsewhere and ask.”

Going further, they said, “O *nagakesara* tree, *rasala*, *sala*, *devadarum*, *punnaga* and *campaka*! You are all pious souls! Have you seen Syama? Did He come this way after stealing our hearts? Are you answering ‘No, no, no?’ Do not speak lies while shaking your leaves. How can it be otherwise, for the hairs on your branches are all standing on end.”

After getting no replies to their inquiries, the *gopis* said, “They are acting as a group, and out of cruelty they are not responding. Very well, we will go elsewhere and ask again.” They asked a *tamala* tree, “O *tamala* tree! Having the same color as you, Kṛṣṇa is your friend. Out of affection it appears that your respected friend has embraced you. Although you are unaware of it, the bees are licking up His bodily fragrance, which is oozing from your bark. You have lost consciousness because of His embrace; therefore, you do not understand our request. What is the use? Let us go somewhere else.”

The *gopis* felt that the trees had deliberately kept silent because they are male, but that *tulasi*, being female, would sympathize with their plight. The *gopis* addressed *tulasi*, “O auspicious *tulasi*! Has Madhava, impelled by the delight of love, gone by here giving you pleasure with the touch of His hand? O fortunate *tulasi*! No one in the universe compares with you. Please hear our request and tell us where we can find Kṛṣṇa.

“Since you are devoid of creeper-like arms, you have no problem of rivalry from other women. You ornament the chest of Kṛṣṇa as a garland hanging from His neck to His feet. But will you not permit any other garland to hang there too? Being non-envious and compassionate, please tell us where your lover has gone, having stolen our minds, life airs, and intelligence. In this world it is a law among friends that one should sacrifice his own life to save a friend.”

Hearing no answer, the exasperated *gopis* said, “We see that after being touched by Him, you fell into a state of separation and lost all strength of mind and intelligence. So how can we ask you? How can a distressed person help another distressed person? Therefore let us go elsewhere.”

“O friend *malati*! With your eyes did you embrace the one wearing garlands of you? You must have seen Him? Otherwise why are you proudly smiling with your flowers? O friend *mallika*! Do not hide. You must have seen the

son of Nanda Maharaja because you have stolen the blackish color of Kṛṣṇa's body with the swarms of bees encircling you.

“O friend *jati*! You are truthful by nature so you will not deceive us. Your reddish flowers indicate that the fickle-minded Syama has marked your limbs with His nails. O *yuthika*! With the swarms of buzzing bees, you seem to be weeping. Why is that? Has Kṛṣṇa, who steals one's heart just by seeing Him, stolen your mind as He has ours?”

Receiving no reply, the *gopis*, having lost all awareness of the external world, continued questioning the trees even though they could not answer. “O *kurubaka* tree! O red *asoka* tree! Please destroy our lamentation. Please tell us where Kṛṣṇa has gone. Do not say that He has not come on this path! The young leaves clipped by His sharp nails reveal His whereabouts.”

Looking in another direction, they said, “O *kovidara*! You are a learned tree, so please tell us which path Kṛṣṇa has traversed? After seeing Him your inner attraction to Him is now manifesting as bright red flowers. O *panasa* (jackfruit) tree! Do not be afraid. Tell us where that thief has gone after stealing our souls and abandoning us. Due to His glance, you are feeling joyful and displaying your thorny fruits.

“O fortunate *jambu* tree! You have certainly seen Kṛṣṇa, because your fruits have become black as bumblebees by the influence of His elegant effulgence. O friend, pleasing *bilva* branch! You are fortunate. Kṛṣṇa has held your beautiful fruit in His lotus hand. While thinking of Hari, whose complexion is the color of a rain cloud, the hairs on your fruits are standing on end.

“O *bakula*! You are blissful from seeing the moon face of Hari who has skillfully strung a garland from your fallen flowers. O friend, branch of the mango tree! It is appropriate that you drip tears of honey after having felt His nails as He broke off your new mango buds.

“O *kadamba* tree. It seems that while entering the forest Hari has taken shelter of you to engage in pastimes. Climbing on this branch, He picked your blossoms to use for flower bombs. We infer this from seeing the fallen leaves and buds scattered about your base. Having smelled the sweet scent of His body, the bees have left you to follow Him. Though you cannot go with us, please tell us where we can find that fragrant personality.

“O trees living by the banks of the Yamuna who have dedicated your very existence to the welfare of others, please tell us where Hari has gone. O groves of creepers! With your crooked bodies filled with fruit, you seem to be offering new youthfulness to your beloved. Where has Kṛṣṇa, the source of your good fortune, now gone?

“O wives of the Kṛṣṇa *sara* deer! You are famous for your beautiful wide eyes, which attract even the mind of the all-attractive Kṛṣṇa, who is worshiped by those who have performed countless pious acts. Though your eyes are filled with the sweet form of His body, your minds are not satisfied. Being thus disturbed, your sleep is broken by His constant remembrance.

“O friend! Can you tell us which path Kṛṣṇa took after satisfying the trees with His touch? He put us in sorrow by stealing our hearts, but did He look at you with the pink edges of His compassionate eyes? Be friendly and generous, and do not cheat us.”

Seeing the doe moving fearlessly toward them, the *gopis* continued, “O friends! This doe is the most merciful among all the animals, trees and creepers. She is walking along the path showing us the way to Kṛṣṇa. Thus she is diminishing the burning pain in our hearts.” As the *gopis* followed the doe they happened to lose sight of her. Full of anxiety, the *gopis* thought that Kṛṣṇa must be nearby and that the doe, being afraid of Him, must have hidden herself. Then the *gopis* searched throughout the dense forest.

Seeing a cuckoo, they said, “O cuckoo! Kṛṣṇa must have certainly glanced upon you while enjoying your song, for your artistic melody is imitating His tune. You have a close friendship with Kṛṣṇa because you are sweet voiced; black with a red beak, fond of the forests, eager to relish mango sprouts, and completely remove the sorrow of separated lovers. In spite of this, you are not telling us about Him.”

Saying this, they approached a swan waddling along the path and happily said, “O swan, please come here! Has merciful Yamuna-devi sent you here? We understand that our beloved is on her bank, therefore, she has sent you to bring us to Him. O friend, we are longing to see Kṛṣṇa. Please show us the path.”

After following the swan for some distance, they saw a female *cakravaka* bird and said, “O *cakravaki*! After seeing Kṛṣṇa, you have forgotten about your separation from your partner, and have kindly come to show us where He is. This is the proper conduct among pure-hearted friends.” Coming before the *cakravaki*, they smelled an aromatic breeze and said, “The news that the *cakravaki* has come to deliver is now certain. The thief of our hearts is somewhere nearby.”

Seeing swarms of bees, the *gopis* remarked, “The bees have gone mad from smelling the sandalwood scented breeze blowing from a distant source, namely the flower garland of some *gopi* whose body is exuding a divine fragrance.” Beckoning the bees, they inquired, “O gentle bumble bees! Tell us, why you have given up the nectar-filled flowers just to buzz madly around in the sky?” From the excited humming of the bees, the *gopis* understood that Kṛṣṇa must be nearby.

Thinking thus, the *gopis* walked gingerly over the fresh grass. To confirm their suspicion that the earth was shivering in ecstasy, the *gopis* asked, “O Mother Earth! Can you tell us why your bodily hairs are standing on end? It cannot be due to the touch of Vamanadeva’s feet, or the embrace of Varahadeva. Your good fortune causes the animals and plants to tremble, because at every step you get to kiss the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Because of this He has slowed down His gait.”

Further along, the *gopis* saw a flock of *cakora* birds moving on the ground and said joyfully, “He who has stolen the jewel of our minds has certainly gone on this path because there are some male *cakora* birds over there. They are sitting in a line drinking the streams of nectar from the moon rays of His toenails. From this we conclude that He must be near.”

Imitating Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

As the *gopis* reached the limit of their doubts, questions, and confirmations, their emotional state of *unmada* (divine madness in loving separation from Kṛṣṇa) gradually manifested the presence of Kṛṣṇa within their hearts. With their hearts purified by perfect knowledge, the *gopis* remained fixed on the right path forever engaged in pleasing the Lord. No one but Kṛṣṇa could control them. Changing their mood, the *gopis* entered a state of ecstasy by fully absorbing themselves in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Their distress

of separation disappeared as they re-enacted His various pastimes. Who would not be attracted to those pastimes that they had either heard about or directly witnessed? The killing of Putana and the lifting of Govardhana, for example, caused wonder and astonishment.

In imitating Kṛṣṇa's exploits, there are two types of pastimes. In the first type, all the ingredients are favorable such as stealing the *gopis'* clothing. In the second type there are both favorable and unfavorable elements as in the pastime of killing Putana. The favorable elements are conducive for developing an intense taste of Kṛṣṇa *prema*. The mind becomes flooded with taste like a river overflowing its banks. Because contrary or unfavorable elements give distaste, they do not absorb the mind. Therefore, one does not make a full effort to identify with those pastimes.

Yogamaya always accompanied the *gopis* to assist their mood. Anticipating the presence of contrary elements in pastimes such as killing Putana, which the *gopis* would imitate, Yogamaya skillfully harmonized all the contrary elements in order to favor the *gopis*. To do this Yogamaya decided to personally take the role of Putana and other demons. Under the influence of Yogamaya's illusory powers, one exalted *gopi*, acting like infant Kṛṣṇa, saw Yogamaya as Putana manifesting all the contrary and favorable elements. Climbing on her lap, that *gopi* drank her breast milk while holding on to her in complete dependence. The attempts to capture the mood of Kṛṣṇa were not artificial but spontaneous. The *gopis* did not just identify with Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa Himself had entered into them to reenact these pastimes.

Yogamaya also took the role of *sakatasura* (cart demon) while one of the beautiful *gopis* played Kṛṣṇa. Pained by hunger, Kṛṣṇa cried, kicked the cart and demolished it with His toes, delicate as new shoots. Kṛṣṇa Himself had entered the minds of the *gopis*, and their minds had entered into Kṛṣṇa. Completely identifying with Kṛṣṇa, they lost all awareness of being women. Identifying fully as Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis* appeared brilliantly effulgent, as if clouds surrounded by stationary lightning had entered their hearts.

Their hearts resembled intense moonlight within the clouds, or clumps of lotuses infested with slumbering bees, while their bodies shone brilliant as powdered saffron. Conquered by the influence of identifying with Kṛṣṇa, the *gopis'* senses submitted to Kṛṣṇa in their hearts. Thus they fully absorbed themselves.

As with previous pastimes, Yogamaya attracted the joyful *gopis* to imitate the killing of Trnavarta. But Yogamaya did not take the form of Trnavarta, because assuming that form contradicted the mood of the loving pastimes. But to enthuse that particular *gopi*, Yogamaya took the mood of Trnavarta, the demon sent by Kamsa to kill Kṛṣṇa. Playing the role of Kṛṣṇa, the *gopi* said, “I am Kṛṣṇa and I will kill you.” In this way Yogamaya showed her powers.

Then, one *gopi*, acting as baby Kṛṣṇa, crawled about while Her jeweled belt tinkled. Sometimes she stopped briefly, turned her head, and looked around with worried eyes. With a frightened face like a sinful criminal, that *gopi* played the butter thief. Taking the role of mother Yasoda, Yogamaya tried to bind that butter thief with ropes. Feeling bound up by an irate mother, that *gopi* shed tears. Afterwards while crawling on the earth she got stuck between two *yamala-arjuna* trees created by Yogamaya, and then pulled them down.

As Kṛṣṇa, one *gopi* said, “I will go play in the forest and herd the calves with Balarama and the other cowherd boys. At that time, I will kill Vatsasura.” Yogamaya supplied the calves, the Vatsa demon, the cowherd friends, and His brother Balarama. Merged in that event, the *gopi* enacted the killing of Vatsasura.

One *gopi*, holding a flute in her tender hands, produced sweet melodies by deftly moving her copper-colored fingers. Then she perfectly imitated how Kṛṣṇa called the cows that had wandered far away. In a loud, affectionate voice she called out for the cows, “Savali! Dhavali! Dhumali! Kali! Nila! Please come here!”

Imitating Kṛṣṇa’s playful pranks with His boyfriends, one *gopi* walked about with her arm resting on the shoulder of a friend. Looking like a water lily stalk with long arms, she declared, “I am Kṛṣṇa! Just see how gracefully I move!” At that she moved proudly.

The author says, “I think that Kṛṣṇa actually entered the *gopis*’ hearts and enacted each of these pastimes to enjoy the experience. Otherwise, how could the *gopis* speak and perform actions when their minds and consciousness had already stopped functioning?”

Unable to suppress her spontaneous mood, another *gopi* pretended to be Kṛṣṇa standing on the bank of the Yamuna. Though lacking the proper ingredients she was itching to fight and smash the malevolent Kaliya. In that mood she said, “O lowest of snakes! Do not spoil My Yamuna playground. Get out of here right now!” In this way she repeatedly uttered harsh words. Then that *gopi* danced on Kaliya’s hoods. Yogamaya skillfully arranged all these pastimes.

Another *gopi* gave up her own identity and achieved oneness with the Lord of her life. Upon seeing an accidental forest fire, she felt blissful by identifying as Kṛṣṇa. By the influence of Yogamaya that *gopi* displayed the unique ability to extinguish the fire and save the cowherd boys. She said, “Do not fear this blazing forest fire, for I am the deliverer from all danger. Quickly close your eyes and I will protect you by swallowing this fire.”

Meditating on Kṛṣṇa, another *gopi* entered a humorous mood and moved about stealthily. Then she secretly stole the *gopis*’ clothing and climbed up a *kadamba* tree. Overwhelmed with the joy of Kṛṣṇa, she spoke affectionately to the innocent *gopis*. “Come to Me one by one, not all together! Each of you collect your own clothing. If you do not do as I say, then I will not give them back. What do I care if the king becomes angry?”

The *gopis* then manifested the auspicious pastime of the *brahmanas*’ wives giving charity. Identifying herself with Kṛṣṇa, one leading *gopi*, full of bliss and expert in speaking, smiled sweetly as she greeted the other *gopis* who had arrived before her at the edge of town. “O fortunate women! Welcome! The austerities you have performed in household life are faultless. I know that you have great devotion and faith in Me. Now that you have seen Me, you should return home. O fortunate women, you should not remain here. By hearing about My glories, chanting My name, and remembering My form, you can taste real love for Me. This is not accomplished by direct contact with Me.”

One *gopi*, her heart totally one with Kṛṣṇa, enacted the pleasing pastime of lifting Govardhana, the king of all mountains. Their faces full of worry, the cows, cowherd men and their wives took shelter from the heavy downpour. To dispel their fear, the *gopi* playing Kṛṣṇa said, “O cows, cowherd men and *gopis*, do not be afraid of the cruel wind and torrents of rain. Relax and be calm. I will lift the mountain with My hand, and turn the whole world

into an umbrella to protect you. Do not fear that the mountain will slip from My hand, and do not distrust My words. If Ananta can hold up the earth with its heavy oceans, islands and mountains, why can't the crown jewel of the town hold up at least one mountain?"

To alleviate the anguish of the Vrajavasis, she raised her slender left arm that smelled more fragrant than *khas khas*. While holding her arm straight up like a flagpole, she waved her shawl to remove their fear. Standing with her right hand on her waist, she said, "Come under this beautiful umbrella, which resembles a delicate lotus flower spreading for two hundred miles in all directions."

One *gopi* imitated Rasa-bihari who acted like the moon disappearing during an eclipse. She attracted all the Gokula *gopis* with the enchanting tune of her flute. Surmounting the obstacles of their families, they came to Kṛṣṇa with desires for direct conjugal union. Playing the part of Kṛṣṇa, that *gopi* said, "O chaste women! Welcome! Please come here! All auspiciousness to you! What may I do to please you? Please tell Me the reason for your coming here. Since your clothing and ornaments are all topsy-turvy, I infer that you came here in the greatest haste. Why did you do this?"

"This night is quite frightening, and dangerous creatures are lurking about. This is not a proper place for women. So I am telling you, please go home. Now you have seen this Vrndavana forest, full of blooming flowers, cooled by fragrant breezes, and washed by the light of the full moon. What more is there to see?"

"O lotus eyed *gopis*! Women should not stay with a lusty man like me. Direct association with Me is not nearly as enjoyable as meditating on Me, hearing about My qualities, and glorifying Me."

[The *gopi* imitating Kṛṣṇa has a hidden, inner meaning in her words which is, "Why shouldn't those who know the highest *dharma* stay with Me? Directly contacting Me is infinitely more pleasurable than associating with Me through meditation, hearing, or chanting My glories."]

After speaking sweetly in imitation of Kṛṣṇa, the *gopi* thought, "Now I will disappear." Before she could enact the pastime of Kṛṣṇa's disappearance, however, all the *gopis* suddenly awoke from their trance of identifying as Kṛṣṇa. Leaving the stage of *unmada*, they regained consciousness and

experienced a different degree of ecstatic love. Upon opening their doe-eyes, the *gopis* again burned in the fire of separation. Anxious and worried, they frantically searched for Kṛṣṇa in all directions.

Kṛṣṇa's Footprints

The special beauty and pleasure the *gopis* had attained by imitating Kṛṣṇa's pastimes gradually faded away. Though the *gopis* had extraordinary patience, their anxious eyes revealed the artificiality of their composed state. After remaining in that state for a short time, they suddenly saw Kṛṣṇa's footprints in a corner of the forest. His footprints looked like a row of sprouts suddenly manifesting from the bosom of the earth. Those footprints appeared to have dropped from their eyes onto the earth after having been hidden in their own hearts. Now appearing as the signature of the goddess of the forest, they looked like they were drawn by the demigods headed by Brahma for worship, and had suddenly fallen from the sky. They looked like two new leaves sprouted from a creeper growing on the path.

The *gopis'* hearts melted with bliss upon seeing Kṛṣṇa's footprints. Their limbs broke out with tiny bumps of exhilaration as they spoke loudly and impudently amongst themselves. "O, just see our fortune. Hari's footprints, shining like the rays of the moon, have appeared here. Observing the marks of a flag, lotus, goad, and thunderbolt stimulate affection in the hearts of advanced devotees. O lotus-eyed *gopis*! Please examine these footprints with all your life.

"Studying the imprint on the soft sand, we see that the ball of the foot is deeper and the middle portion is raised. The trail of footprints with their different marks such as lotus flowers are decorations in the *simanta* (part in a woman's hair) of the earth. The distinguishing mark of the flag in these footprints attracts everyone, the lotus cools the earth, the thunderbolt is for killing us, and the goad is for gouging out our hearts." As the *gopis* gave such contrary meanings to the marks on Kṛṣṇa's feet, they bathed in a natural splendor of love that would capture the heart of anyone perceiving it.

They continued, "The sweetness of these footprints is astounding! Being stupefied by it, even the bees are falling in the dust. They have rejected flower pollen, but they will not give up the dust of Kṛṣṇa's feet. Just like

great devotees, the bees have become very fortunate and attractive by this attachment. The dust has become blessed by the touch of Govinda's lotus feet, which remove the agony of the earth and break the meditations of sober sages. Brahma, Siva, the goddess Laksmi, and all the *devatas* worship these footprints. Let us now take the relishable dust of the Lord of enjoyment to our bosoms to relieve our long-standing incessant pains of sorrow."

Radha's Footprints

Then one discriminating *gopi* spoke, "Stop taking the dust! Do not wipe out Kṛṣṇa's footprints! Our eyes derive satisfaction just from looking closely at these wonderful footprints. Do not disturb them by smudging them with your hands!"

After saying this they traced the line of footprints with their eyes and proceeded along the path. At one place they saw the footprints of Radha, who had attracted Kṛṣṇa with Her sincere love, and attained the coveted position of being the only *gopi* engaged in His loving service. While Hari held Her tightly to His chest, Radhika felt proud that She had so easily won the affection of the Lord. Such an auspicious position is rarely attained even in the heavenly planets.

Admiring the footprints of the girl endowed with such good fortune, one *gopi* said, "O look here, they appear like a group of buds twisted out of place on a fine creeper. It seems these footprints are thoroughly intermixed with those of Her lover. It seems that Radha must have put Her right arm on Kṛṣṇa's shoulder, just as love-intoxicated she-elephant rests Her trunk on the shoulder of an accompanying bull elephant. Radhika's fortune is unrivaled. Being so pleased with Her and bound by Her love, Govinda pitilessly abandoned us, who are also trying to attain Him. Showing His loyalty to Her alone, He has brought Her to a secluded place for enjoyment."

Thinking for a moment, Syama-sakhi suddenly said, "Radha is the peerless abode of all auspiciousness. She is the crest-jewel amongst millions of the best women in the universe, endowed with the pious results of their previous deeds. Just as there is no possibility of moonlight without a moon,

a cuckoo's call without spring, or lightning without rain, similarly, it is impossible to imagine Radha existing without the moon of Kṛṣṇa.”

After Radha's intimate *sakhis* finished their glorification, Padma, a confidante of Candravali, who has a face more beautiful than a lotus, replied to dark-complexioned Syama-sakhi. She said, “O Syame! Though you are partial to your own group, your Radha has completely given you up. She has thrown you away like an old garland, though She claims you are Her very life. After stealing the beloved of us all, Radhika has gone off alone to enjoy with Him in another forest. How astonishing! Radha's friendship toward you is only external, it is not from Her heart.”

Syama-sakhi replied, “O Padma, due to lack of intelligence you are saturated with envy! Give this up and just listen to me. Since Her childhood, Radhika has thrown Her body in the flowing river of Kṛṣṇa's nectarean love. She has no control over Her own body. It simply races along in the huge currents of that river and She cannot protect Herself. Just like an aquatic plant, Radhika floats helplessly down that river.

“Therefore I say that Radha does not deserve to be criticized. She is praiseworthy in all respects. The *campaka* flower is born with its covering and grows with it. They are not separate. Yet in time, when the *campaka* gives up the covering, it is not considered a fault. So what is the fault in Radha? Her friends are as dear as Her own life. Even if She appears to leave Her friends, Radhika never breaks the bond of friendship.”

Another friend of Candravali said, “O Syame! People on the same side never see their own faults. Because of that, your speaking about Radha sounds reasonable. But your assessment is not fair to all us *gopis*. The fact is that She alone is mercilessly drinking the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips, which should be drunk by all of us. She is more skillful than the *cakora* bird. Thus, seeing Radha's footprints does not give us any pleasure at all.”

Then the associates of Radhika gazed at Her footprints, the object of happiness for the eyes. This filled them with an emotional mixture of joy and pride, but they could not manifest the ecstasy because of their withered condition. Fixing their eyes on the dust, they walked forward with a graceful gait. Upon losing sight of Radhika's footprints, which remove all sorrow, they considered, “O, what is this? We cannot see Her footprints

over here! We only see the attractive footprints of Hari. It is obvious that the sharp sprouts of grass hurt the tender soles of Her feet, so Hari carried Her on His chest.”

Another *gopi* said, “What you say is correct. Because Kṛṣṇa is going forward carrying Her on His chest, which She is relishing, His footprints are sinking down in the soft sand. O beloved of Kṛṣṇa, your achievement of the highest love after many births of accumulated devotional actions is as relishable as the bee licking the honey dripping from the head of a love-maddened elephant. You must certainly have been overcome with the variety of ecstatic emotions fructifying from Your ripened attachment. Your lover has surely satisfied You by fulfilling all Your desires.”

Seeing Candravali’s face shriveling up from her comments, that *gopi* spoke an aside in order to create peace with Her. She said, “Together we came here, together we saw Hari, and together we heard His harsh words. Finally we all enjoyed together with Him. Now rejecting us like useless grass, He has put You on His chest and carried You away. This terrible act reveals the vast extent of Your pious deeds. Therefore I say, we should not look at Your footprints which only increase our suffering.”

When the rival group of *gopis* saw Radhika’s footprints again a little further on they said, “Here we see that Kṛṣṇa, being tired from carrying the heavy weight, removed Radha, who is more beautiful than Lakṣmi, from His chest, and put Her down. Look here! There are two pairs of footprints facing each other. They must have stood here speaking intimately. Look here! It appears that they have placed their arms on each other’s shoulders and embraced. Being tired, they walked sluggishly here and there.” Absorbed in such thoughts, the rival party of *gopis*, due to unwarranted envy, suddenly took on a harsh mood.

Being knowledgeable of spiritual love and endowed with friendship for Her, the *gopis* supporting Radha did not consider themselves the least bit unlucky. Seeing Radhika’s extraordinary fortune filled them with satisfaction. Expecting the fire of separation to end soon, the *gopis* submerged in bliss.

Meeting again, all the *gopis* walked along while looking at the footprints. In a short time they arrived at the pleasant bank of the Yamuna, which

appeared like the bosom of the earth washed by silvery water dripping from the moon. Not seeing the complete footprints of Kṛṣṇa, they considered, “We can no longer see the signs of a goad, flag, lotus, and thunderbolt. Here Kṛṣṇa has left the impression of only the front part of His feet because He stood on His toes to pick some flowers for His beloved.”

Seeing a second set of footprints, they considered, “O look here! On the path of white sand, sparkling like camphor, there are marks of His feet and the mark of a fine lower cloth between them. But Radha’s footprints are not here. Certainly Kṛṣṇa sat down here with His girlfriend on His lap to set flowers in Her hair.”

Looking in another direction, they said, “How amazing! Kṛṣṇa desired to heighten the pleasure with an unseasonal blossoming of *bakula* flowers and *asoka* flowers which was caused by Her tears of love and the touch of Her foot. On Kṛṣṇa’s entreaty, Radhika suddenly left His bosom with a desire to collect those flowers. See there, Radha’s *alta* (red coloring on feet) has marked the root of the *asoka* tree, like a new sprout. Quitting the delightful taste of the *bakula* flowers, the bees are absorbed at the base of that tree, which has been moistened by Radha’s tears. From these signs we understand that Radhika-Syama are nearby, so we should look for them here.”

We will give the following explanation to destroy all false interpretations and establish the correct meaning of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* verse (10.30.34):

***reme tayā cātma-rata, atmārāmo ‘py akhaṇḍitaḥ
kāmināṁ darśayan dainyaṁ, strīṇāṁ caiva durātmatām***

Sukadeva Gosvami said, “Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed with that *gopi*, although He enjoys only within, being self-satisfied and complete in Himself. Thus by contrast He showed the wretched-ness of ordinary lusty men and hard-hearted women.”

Elaborating on this, Kṛṣṇa said, “In this material world lusty men are vile and lusty women are low. Though I am full of desire, I am not vile. I am not a lusty person bound up by *karmic* reactions like ordinary men. But I display seemingly lusty activities for the benefit of the fallen souls. The *gopis* are not ordinary women. Being fortunate, they have attained My

direct association. Other than Me, all material sense enjoyers are vile. Other than the *gopis* all other women are low.”

By Kṛṣṇa’s mercy the *gopis* had attained the treasure of His association, but then He renounced them and disappeared. Now that Supreme Lord, though self-satisfied, became conquered by the continuous affection of the surrendered *gopis*. He displayed His intimate conjugal pastimes in order to receive the offering of their love.

Radha Dispels the Sorrow of the Gopis

The generous and soft-hearted Radhika, who is the rarest personality in all time and space, waved like a victory flag among the fortunate women endowed with auspicious qualities. Radha’s ecstasy quickly diminished when She thought that Her friends had been deprived of Kṛṣṇa’s association during Her private delight with Him. She considered, “The Lord of My life has shown attraction only for Me. How can My friends such as Lalita and Visakha maintain their lives in separation from Kṛṣṇa? Therefore, I will play some tricks, so He will move slightly away from Me and then My companions will be able to come and meet Me.”

With this in mind, good-natured Radhika spoke to Kṛṣṇa, “O ocean of unlimited enjoyment and love! I am completely fatigued and cannot go any further. I cannot walk anymore and I have no means to move forward. Please carry Me wherever You want to go. The night has also deepened. O supreme enjoyer! Let us just rest a while on the river bank.”

To refute these words, Kṛṣṇa pretended to be pained by them. Although by nature Radha’s statements seemed to be devoid of pride, Kṛṣṇa took them externally as an exhibition of pride. Accepting that such pride befits an independent lover, Kṛṣṇa thought, “This pleases My heart, but I will respond to this show of pride by disappearing from Her.” To enact the pastime of trying to break Her pride, Kṛṣṇa adopted a harsh mood. His eyes reddened as He delivered words meant to break Her composure. Kṛṣṇa said, “Since we cannot find a palanquin here, please climb on My beautiful raised shoulders.” While saying this Kṛṣṇa suddenly disappeared from Radha’s eyes.

Radha’s Lamentation

The sweet clever talks of Radhika, which had engulfed the earth in a nectarean wave of happiness, now turned into a wave of poison. The fragrant sandalwood pulp rubbed on Her body transformed into blazing coals. The *kajala* decorating Her eyes turned into contaminated water. The strands of Her pearl necklace lolled about like a snake. The *betel* nut packets, which give a pleasing taste to the mouth, seemed like leaves from a poison vine. The necklaces, belts and other artistically fashioned accouterments on Her body resembled crooked piles of sharp poison. Her voice choked up and Her warm tears smeared Her *kajala* into a black line dripping down Her breasts. Kṛṣṇa's teasing broke Radhika's heart. The pain was so sharp that She felt She was being sawed in half.

Then Radha spoke loudly, "O Lord! O giver of pleasure! O ocean of love! Where are you? O beloved! Please be visible to Me! Though I know You are here, I cannot see You. Because of this My life is full of suffering. Hoping to attain You again, I cannot give up My life, yet out of separation, I cannot maintain my life. The pain of separation is getting stronger and about to cut the shackles of hope maintaining My life. Please give up Your anger, and appear before My eyes so that My life air does not leave My body."

[In solitude, Radhika carried on the following imaginary conversation with Kṛṣṇa.]

Radha: "Kṛṣṇa, if You say, 'What does it matter to Me if You give up Your life?' Then I reply that You cannot say that, for You have great love for Me and cannot bear My separation. If You do not appear, then You will have to carry My dead body through the forests while weeping. This is the truth."

Kṛṣṇa: "I disappeared because of Your proud words, therefore, I am not at fault."

Radha: "Neither am I at fault in this matter. You are angry because of My pride, but I did not speak out of pride. I spoke so that My friends could catch up to us, not out of pride."

Kṛṣṇa: "I disapprove such actions and cannot bear them."

Radha: "O Lord! Show your moonlike face, so that the pitiful state of Your beloved will not be seen when My friends arrive at this spot. They will die if they see Me in this state. Do not kill them. Show Yourself as before, so

that they do not condemn Your love. I cannot see any way that You will be able to answer their criticism.”

Kṛṣṇa: “I left You, just as I left them. The same action will not yield different results. I have equally rejected both You and them.”

Radha: “Why have You acted so boldly, leaving Me alone in the forest? Leaving them only produces misery, but leaving Me alone will kill Me. They do not experience such misery because they are together, but I am all alone. They remain alive by comforting each other with sweet words.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Why do You want to give up Your body, the abode of beauty and sweetness?”

Radha: “Cursed is the night, without the moonlight. Cursed are the lotuses, without the sun. Unfortunate is a person ignored by the lord of Her life. The qualities You mentioned (beauty and sweetness) only display their perfection when enjoyed by the lover.”

Taking the form of a snake, the pain of separation from Kṛṣṇa entered the cave of Radha’s soft, sweet heart and bit that faultless person. Radha’s heart pained like the sky afflicted by the scorching summer sun. The agony in Her body surged way beyond the breaking point. Her consciousness rapidly faded as She tried desperately to understand Kṛṣṇa’s intentions, As the tenth stage of ecstasy approached, Radhika succumbed to extreme fainting fits, appearing like untimely visits of friends.

Out of shame and fear caused by Her love for Kṛṣṇa, lotus-eyed Radha restrained Her breathing and allowed only a little air to enter. Like a wilted lotus stalk, Her body fell on the sandy earth. People will criticize if one remains alive after being rejected by a lover. Radha’s love found perfection in thinking only of Kṛṣṇa’s happiness. If She died, He would lament. So to prevent that She kept breathing.

Then all the creepers of Vrndavana blew their sweet flower fragrances upon Her. Swarms of bees fanned Her with vibrating wings. Birds cried and the deer wept as they roamed about anxiously. In this way the forest dwellers served Radha’s mood. Radha’s shadow was a bed of lotus petals and the moonlight was a balm of sandalwood paste. Her lotus stem arms protected Her sides, and Her swoon was a best friend skilled at removing the pangs of sorrow.

The Gopis Meet Radhika

Meanwhile, the creepers indicated the anguished emotions of Radhika's friends. The leaves fluttered about, as if beating their chests in grief. The birds cried in loud voices and the flowers shed tears of honey. While continuing to search out Kṛṣṇa's path, the doe-eyed *gopis* discovered their unhappy friend close by.

Bewildered by separation from Her lover, Radha was lying alone on the ground. She appeared like a lightning bolt fallen from a cloudless sky, or like a moonbeam dropped to the earth due to its heavy weight. Radha looked like a garland of gold and jewels fallen from the crown of the splendor of the three worlds, or like a wealth of gold ejected suddenly from the earth. She seemed like a self-manifesting bowl of fragrant *kunkuma*, or an attractive land lotus in the lap of the goddess of the Vrndavana forest. Radhika appeared like a garland of *campaka* flowers shot from Cupid's bow, the *gorocana tilaka* on the forehead of Mother Earth, the flame of an oil lamp inside the house of a forest goddess, or a celestial herbal creeper fallen on the earth.

Seeing Radhika lying there and considering various possibilities, they said, "O look! There is the *gopi* whom the hard-hearted son of the king of Vrndavana took away after rejecting us. Then feeling such favoritism unfair, He disappeared, leaving Her alone like a cloud without lightning, a moon without light, or a jewel without sparkle."

In choked voices, Lalita and other *sakhis* said, "If that is so, how could the son of the king of Vrndavana just reject Her? How could He just leave Her, helpless as a little plant and as delicate as the bud of *aparmarga*, alone to suffer in separation? But it is not possible that He has left Her alone. It seems that after lengthy enjoyment, our friend has fallen asleep out of fatigue. He must be waiting nearby trembling in apprehension. Although He is close by, due to misfortune we cannot see Him."

One *gopi* said, "But if He was nearby, we could detect His presence by His fragrance."

Bhadra *gopi* replied, "Perhaps, He detected our quiet footsteps and left out of displeasure."

Syama-sakhi said, “Listen, if that is so, why didn’t He take His beloved with Him as before?”

Finding fault in Radha, Candravali said, “On seeing Her pride and lack of good manners, our beloved did not take Her with Him.”

Syama-sakhi replied, “That cannot be, for our beloved cannot be so crude and distasteful as to leave Her alone, burning in the forest fire of separation.”

Doubting the identity of the *gopi* lying on the ground, and in order to break the argument over Radha’s condition, some other *sakhi* spoke, “It seems that this is not Radha, for we cannot see Kṛṣṇa here. We are mistaken to think that this is Radha. In order to break our pride, a goddess named Madhuri, who spreads illusion over the world, has appeared here with all her attractiveness.”

Saying this and moving closer, the *gopis* argued amongst themselves saying, “That cannot be Radharani, for She is lying there like a wilted lotus stem. Her heart does not seem to be beating, even slowly. Is this not the embodiment of *karuna rasa* (mellow of pity)? Is this not our friend Murccha (fainting), separated from Her beloved?”

Seeing them coming, Radha’s friend Murccha, feeling somewhat upset at that moment, left Radharani. Standing nearby, the *gopis* thought what to do next. After Murccha-devi departed, Radha, like a person unconscious of her surroundings upon rising from sleep, exclaimed in a choked voice, “O Lord, where are You?” Then She glanced at the assembly of friends surrounding Her.

“This is certainly Radha,” said the *gopis*. They stood around Radhika feeling a mixture of joy, respect, astonishment, and disappointment. The *gopis* looked like silent ducks around a golden lotus, or like all the rivers meeting the Ganges. They resembled all the ingredients of *rasa* (*vibhava*, *anubhava*, *sattvika bhava*) merging in *sthayi bhava*, or like all the *srutis* combining to make the seven notes. The *gopis* surrounding Radhika could be compared to the ornaments, qualities, and emotions evoked in a skillful poem, the metaphors used in a building up a comparison, *cakori* birds collecting rays of the moon, flocks of birds attracted to a fresh garden, or like lotuses blossoming in a lake.

Lalita fanned Radha with bunches of fresh leaves, while others bound up Radhika's hair and wiped the tears from Her face. Candravali said, "How did You fall into the same awkward position that we are in? Where is that cheater, the Lord who put our lives in danger?"

Then a neutral party of *gopis*, inclined to the opposite party, spoke in pure friendship, "Kṛṣṇa rejected us because of You, and then took You away to this lonely place. However our fever of separation abated upon realizing You caused His disappearance. But now that fever of separation has doubled, seeing that He left You as well. It gives us great suffering to see You in this miserable condition."

Radhika's supporters said, "O Sumukhi (beautiful faced one)! Neither Your thoughts nor Your words are deficient. You are famous throughout the universe as being the mine of all jewel-like qualities. The world knows the exalted state of love that You cherish for Kṛṣṇa."

Dhanya-sakhi and other young *gopis* said, "O Sumukhi! Seeing the extent of Your torment, our suffering has diminished. It is well known that a greater poison destroys the potency of a poison, which cannot be counteracted by medicine. O Radha, what is the cause of Your suffering?"

Syama-sakhi said, "O friends! Why should you interrogate Radha like this? Such love is Her very nature. Who has the power to understand that love? For those in love, this poison is equal to life-giving nectar. Simultaneously, it gives one the greatest suffering and the greatest enjoyment. It causes one to faint and restores one to life."

After the *gopis* had spoken, Radha, appreciating their sincere efforts, told them everything that had happened to Her in a soft sweet manner. While shedding warm tears, She revealed the intentions of Her heart, which is a golden bowl of *prema*. The *gopis* intently listened to Her in great astonishment. Then keeping Radha in front, all the *gopis* searched for Kṛṣṇa in order to reduce the fever of their minds. They entered the forest as far as the light of the moon shone. But when they found themselves engulfed in darkness, they lost hope and decided to turn back.

While leaving the dense forest, the *gopis* absorbed their minds in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa. They vowed to see Him as they loudly sang the glories of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental qualities. Then they broke down crying and softly murmured

about Him. The loud humming of a swarm of bees agitated from smelling Kṛṣṇa's fragrant mouth suddenly broke their trance of love.

The *gopis* again came to the bank of the Yamuna. Walking along, they arrived at an auspicious strand of dazzling white sand, finer and softer than camphor dust. They sat down together and sang about Kṛṣṇa for some time. The sweetness of their song, the essence of love in separation, could melt a heart of stone and attract the hearts of the mountains, trees and creepers. How else can that sweetness be described? Even if it could be described, the goddess of speech herself could not do it, because her voice would become choked up. As parrots imitate the words of humans without understanding the meaning, I simply repeat the words of Sukadeva.

Chapter Nineteen: The Gopi Gita

The hearts of all the birds and beasts burned when they heard the *gopis*' sweet, gentle voices crying in grief. The weeping of the *gopis* as they glorified the good qualities of their beloved sounded like a graceful song to attract the hearts of all moving and non-moving beings. The sound of their soft crying distilled the essence of love in separation. Sympathizing with their sorrow, the musical notes, rhythms, and modulations personified to enter their hearts and produce a song.

The *gopis* said, “O beloved, the shelter of Lakṣmi, since the day You appeared You have been the center of attraction in Vṛndavana. In the very place where the inhabitants became happy due to Your appearance, how can your lovers experience such persecution? Why did You abandon us after we fell in love with You and dedicated ourselves solely to You? O beloved! Be merciful, and please show Yourself to us.”

[The *gopis*, forlorn over not finding their beloved Kṛṣṇa, held the following fanciful conversation with Him in His absence.]

The *gopis* imagined Kṛṣṇa saying, “Why didn’t you search for Me and find Me by force?”

Gopis: “We searched for You on every path, in every forest and bower, and under every tree and creeper until we had no more strength. Please appear before us and give pleasure to Your followers.”

Kṛṣṇa: “What have I done to make you so sad?”

Gopis: “O beloved! You have pierced our hearts with the sharp arrows of Your glances.”

Kṛṣṇa: “What is wrong if a witty man just glances at some women?”

Gopis: “We are losing our lives at the expense of Your joking. You are killing the maidservants who have given themselves to You freely, without any price. If it is Your intention to kill us, then why did You repeatedly save us from all kinds of danger—poisoned water, forest fires, and rainstorms?”

Kṛṣṇa: “You were just there among all the other inhabitants of Vṛndavana whom I protected from those calamities.”

Gopis: “Then why did You maintain our lives with the medicine of Your sweet smile, making us forget Your harsh instruction to go home? O independent Lord! We cannot see any reason other than Your own pleasure in doing such things. It seems the only way You can have fun is by killing us and bringing us back to life.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Killing is easy, but reviving the dead is very difficult.”

Gopis: “It is easy for You to restore a person to life. For us, who are at death’s door, seeing You is life! Without seeing You, we have no life. For fun You disappear from us and kill us, and then You reappear and bring us back to life. How astonishing! Though You are born in a family of cowherds, You are not afraid of killing cowherd women. Even ordinary people take care of their family members and distant relatives.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Due to the prayers of Brahma, I have appeared as the Supreme Lord, therefore, I do not belong to any particular family.”

Gopis: “You should not tell lies about Your own greatness. You did not appear due to Brahma’s prayers for protection of the universe. If that is true, then why don’t You protect us, for we are also within the universe.”

[The *gopis* spoke like this due to the bewilderment caused by the intense pain of separation from Kṛṣṇa.]

Gopis: “O Lord! You release men from the fear of material existence, and fulfill the desires of those who love You. O lover, please place Your soft lotus hand, which is caressed by the goddess of fortune, on our heads. You like to break the pride of Your followers. You destroy the grief of Vraja’s people. Your smile shatters the false pride of Your devotees. So please accept us as Your maidservants, and show us Your beautiful moon face.

“Your lotus feet destroy the sins of those who worship You. Those feet follow after the cows in the pastures and are marked with all auspicious symptoms. The effulgence of the jewels on Kaliya’s hoods worships them with reverence. Please place them on our burning breasts. O Lord of our lives! Your sweet voice and charming words have soothed our ears and enthralled our minds. Since we have worshiped You for a long time, please pour the nectar of Your words into our hungry ears once again. O beloved, Your face is washed by the nectar of Your sweet smile! Without seeing You,

we are drying up with grief. Please return and revive us with the nectar of Your sweet red lips.

“It seems however that by taking the medicine that devotees use to counteract the severe pain of separation, our malady has become twice as bad. Every day we *gopis* recollect our previous conversations with You. Words spoken by You are supposed to destroy all sin. They are the elixir of life, the object of praise by the best of poets, and the savior of persons suffering from the three-fold miseries. But in our case, Your words pain our ears, increase our sorrow and suffering, and act to slowly kill us. When one becomes attracted to You, Your words bring both happiness and distress. Is this nectar or poison? Therefore, we cannot understand anything about Your words.”

Kṛṣṇa: “You criticize, but yet you enjoy. If I am such a person, then how can you enjoy?”

Gopis: “Your pastimes and speech are nectarean on the outside but sharper than the sharpest razor within. Those who love You know this well. Though they know, they have fallen under the influence of Your words. At first Your pastimes give happiness, but finally they produce sorrow. Now we understand that. O best of men! Your sweet, loving glances, the intimate pastimes, and the confidential talks we enjoyed with You touched our hearts. But at the same time, they have brought us misery. O deceiver, You are devoid of love, yet we are filled with love. We have become heartbroken by Your neglectful treatment.

“You do not have even a drop of love for us *gopis*, who are saturated with love for You. If You had any love, then You could understand our suffering. We, on the other hand, cannot tolerate seeing You suffer even a speck of grief! When You leave Nandagaon to herd the cows in the forest, our minds are disturbed with the thought that Your feet, softer and more beautiful than a lotus, will be pricked by the rough grass and plants.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Many people walk on the forest path, so there is only pain for My feet? How to understand this? This must all be in your mind.”

Gopis: “What to speak of hearing about and seeing You walk into the forest, just thinking about Your feet, which are soft as fresh lotus petals, and those sharp shoots of grass makes us want to give up our lives. O gallant one! All

day we think of Your suffering in the forest. Such thoughts afflict us with pain just like an ulcer in the heart.

“At the end of the day, You repeatedly show us Your attractive lotus face, covered with dark locks of hair and thickly powdered with dust raised by the cows’ hooves. Unseen, Cupid suddenly enters our hearts, arouses lusty desires in our minds and makes us go mad. Then we think that tonight our beloved will certainly come to our private chambers. All night long we dream of this, but upon waking we feel sorrow. Like this, You never give us happiness! We have always been friendly to You. But today, just for trying to invoke Your love for even a short time, we have ended up with such lamentation.”

“Your lotus feet are the treasure of those who surrender to You. They are the ornament of the earth, and in times of danger they are the appropriate object of meditation. Please put Your lotus feet upon our breasts. The small drops of perspiration on Your feet are like honey in a flower. Your moon-like toenails are like stamens and Your toes are like delicate petals. Please place those lotuses on the *purna kumbha* (full water pots) of our breasts.”
[In this way the *gopis* try to pacify the Lord, and also reveal their desire to enjoy with the Lord.]

Gopis: “O treasure of love! Let us drink the nectar of Your sweet lips, which enhances conjugal pleasure and vanquishes grief. Your flute has become famous by continually relishing that nectar which makes people forget all other attractions! One should not think the lips touched by the flute are contaminated leftovers. Honey, which is the remnants of the bees, is famous for alleviating fevers and is therefore never rejected in this world.”

[In contrast to this the *gopis* describe the intolerable pain they experience.]

Gopis: “When You go off to play in the forest during the day, one fraction of a second becomes like a millenium for us because we cannot see Your beautiful, smiling lotus face. Even when we can eagerly gaze upon Your elegant face, which makes the moon and the lotus look insignificant, the blinking of our eyes is like the destruction at the end of the *yuga*.”

[Next a complaint was spoken by the *gopis* who had been obstructed by their husbands, but then gave up their material bodies and received spiritual

bodies to serve Kṛṣṇa.]

Gopis: “O best of men! Just to see You, we have completely rejected our husbands, friends and relatives. Who but a cheater like You would act so callously, and abandon young women who come to see Him in the middle of the night? Though we are clever, you perplex us. You did not protect any of us. Our minds are repeatedly bewildered as we think of the intimate talks we had with You in secret, feel the rise of lust in our hearts and remember Your loving glances, tender laugh, broad chest, and long arms. Thus we experience intense hankering to enjoy with You. You can save our self-respect while preserving Your own spotless fame. The only purpose of Your appearance on earth is to give bliss to the inhabitants of Vṛndavana. So please destroy the affliction in our minds.

“With great difficulty You have rejected us, just to give us more suffering. O Lord! Your lotus feet are so soft that we hold them gently on our hard breasts, fearing that Your feet will be hurt. Don’t Your tender lotus feet feel pain from the pebbles and sprouts of grass as You roam about in the forest?”

Kṛṣṇa: “By touching My feet didn’t your hard breasts become soft as well? The grass and gravel are also soft. I do not feel any pain from them.”

Gopis: “O beloved, if You say that, it must be true. It cannot be false. By Your glance even a thunderbolt melts. But our minds are harder than a thunderbolt. So should our breasts not remain hard? You have responded to our hardness with equal hardness. Your mind is softer than a flower, but from association with our merciless minds, it has now become extremely hard.”

[Through false praise, the *gopis* speak again about Kṛṣṇa’s lack of compassion.]

Gopis: “It is very unjust that simultaneously You are murdering many women. Acting without reason always brings misfortune. When our life airs try to leave, You obstruct them with great force. What mercy do You show! You give more misery than death itself, for You make us suffer continuously without letting us die.

“We remain alive due to Your presence within our hearts. You act as an expert magician to suddenly appear in our hearts and prevent our life airs

from leaving. That is Your trick. By disappearing externally You try to vanquish our life airs, and a moment later You appear internally and prevent them from leaving. Still You will not be able to save our lives. O Lord! Though we searched for You, we could not find You. Our life airs, angry with this, are now coming out to search for You. You have said, ‘No one can attain Me without My sanction. What then is the use of endeavor?’ If what You say is true, then we know very well that You will never grant such sanction. Therefore stop appearing in our hearts, and let our life airs leave in search of You.”

[The *gopis* speak reasonably to conclude their song of lamentation, *gopi gita*.]

Gopis: “O Lord of our lives! When our life airs leave to search for You, surely they will quickly find You. It is well known that the Lord never disregards His servant.”

Thus having spoken in various charming ways to reveal the pain of their separation from Kṛṣṇa, the doe-eyed *gopis* wept loudly in their desperation to reunite with their beloved. The sweetness of their voices, rivaling the song of the cuckoo, shattered the hearts of the trees and creepers. Standing nearby and pretending to be indifferent, the son of the king of Gokula could no longer tolerate their condition.

The *gopis* loudly sang the glories of their beloved. For a moment they experienced extreme bliss; caught between the happiness of giving up their lives if Kṛṣṇa did not come, and the joy of regaining their lives if He did appear. Understanding their condition, Kṛṣṇa reappeared before His greatest devotees, the beloved *gopis* of Vrndavana. Then Kṛṣṇa, with a smile on His lotus face, stood in front of the *gopis* like a feast of enjoyment to uproot their anguish. Kṛṣṇa dispelled the darkness of the *gopis*’ anger with a merciful glance from His reddish lotus eyes and the moonlight of His gentle smile.

Kṛṣṇa reappeared in order to enlighten them, and make them forget the weeping and lamentation arising constantly in their hearts due to their sweetness, greatness, and gravity. Kṛṣṇa came to fix their intelligence on His perfectly formed, beautiful body from the beginning of their meeting until the end. Merciful Kṛṣṇa manifested before them to bathe their hearts in

the ecstasy of rapturous love. Now they could regard their previous searching here and there for Him in separation to be just a dream.

Kṛṣṇa replaced the emaciated bodies of the *gopis*, which had been burned by the fire of separation, with fresh, cool bodies full of pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's return put their escaping life airs back in their proper places. To make them believe they had never heard the word "separation," Kṛṣṇa appeared so that He could embrace each one of the *gopis* simultaneously, and to kiss their cheeks without even touching their sweet lips.

Standing before them, the dearest friend of the *gopis*, wearing a swaying garland of forest flowers and a yellow garment, looked like a newly arrived Cupid. Kṛṣṇa had not appeared from their hearts, from the forest, from the earth, and not from anywhere. He just stood there. Out of their affection for Him the *gopis* stared at Him with excited, wide-open eyes. All of the *gopis* looked as joyful as night-blooming lotuses at the sudden appearance of the full moon, or like youthful *cataki* birds looking at new clouds arising after a long dry spell. Their hearts swelled in happiness like deer looking at an unexpected downpour on a blazing forest fire, or like the air of life re-entering a dead body. Forgetting all their pains as well as their own bodies, they stood up happily and eagerly approached Kṛṣṇa.

The Gopis Beckon for Pleasure

One *gopi* grasped Kṛṣṇa's lotus hands, another leading *gopi* placed His arms on her musk scented shoulders, and one *gopi*, inclined to service, respectfully took His chewed *betel* in her hands, which served as a golden spittoon. One leading *gopi*, burning with desire, put His lotus feet on her budding breasts. Decorated with the fresh young leaves of His toes, Her breasts looked like a pair of auspicious golden water pots announcing the upcoming *rasa* dance.

Standing at a distance, one *gopi*, beside herself with loving anger, bit her beautiful lips and glared at Him with frowning eyebrows. While casting glances from her reddened eyes smeared with *kajala*, it seemed as if she shot arrows tipped with the poison of pride. Another *gopi* with unblinking eyes drank the honey of His lotus face, but even after deeply relishing its sweetness she did not feel satiated. Only when Kṛṣṇa looked into her eyes did she become satisfied.

One married *gopi* took the Lord through the aperture of her eyes and placed Him in the temple of her heart. Then fearing His departure, with her eyes closed and her bodily hairs standing on end, she continuously embraced Him within. Seeing Kṛṣṇa standing in front of her, one *gopi*, like a golden flower bud, felt bashful, placed her hands down at her sides, and then shook and stretched Her body. One *gopi* became agitated upon beholding the pleasing form of Cupid personified standing at a distance. Then her pride took the form of a *campaka* bow to aim at Kṛṣṇa.

One *cakora*-eyed *gopi*, in order to attract Kṛṣṇa, interlocked her fingers and held them over her head. Shaking off her fatigue, she stretched her body. Her two arms framed her brilliant moon-like face decorated with a mild smile. One very bold *gopi* moved her hand around in a circle while snapping her fingers to rid herself of shyness. The effulgence emitting from her smile provided a pathway for the shyness to pass out of her body.

Taking her braid in her flower petal fingers, one doe-eyed *gopi* tucked it between her breasts. Then she forcibly pressed her breasts together with her two arms while closing her eyes. Her hairs stood on end as she embraced the braid in this way for some time. By this she indicated her desire to enjoy with Kṛṣṇa.

One lotus-faced girl, her forehead covered with perspiration due to the spread of ecstatic thrill bumps, joyfully gazed on a toy lotus flower and smelled it. Then brushing away the bees gathering about, she affectionately kissed it. [This *gopi* reveals the wonder, the pretense of remorse in the competition between rivals, and a request to kiss the Lord that *madhurya-rasa* generates.]

One *cakora*-eyed *gopi* held the shoulder of a friend with her arm while casting a sidelong glance at the face of her beloved. The sidelong glance is a sign of her bashfulness in attempting to conceal her real desire. Holding the *gopi*'s shoulder reveals her desire to embrace Kṛṣṇa.

One *gopi* undid her hair and again rebound it while her glistening golden bangles chimed sweetly. In bewilderment, she thought her anger hid in her bound up hair, and so she searched there to quell it. Her actions indicate a complaint after enjoying with the Lord, and a display of obstinacy from Her proud nature.

One *gopi* put her little finger in her left ear and scratched it while shaking her left arm. The jingling noise from her bangles sounded like a victory cry in the battle of love. One thin *gopi*, her bangles tinkling, aimlessly twirled a delicate lotus with her right hand. It appeared to be a giant whirlpool in the river of fresh beauty, whose sound announced victory in the battle of love.

Due to the bliss from intense desire and the ecstatic anger arising from discovering Kṛṣṇa's deceit, one *gopi* moistened all over with perspiration. As she trembled in the wind, the edge of her upper garment swayed back and forth. She looked like the personified flag of victory in the battle of love.

One skillful *gopi* laughed loudly in order to catch Kṛṣṇa's attention. It seemed like a shower of flowers from the creeper of desire growing within her, which had fallen down due to the force of the tempest of longing. Simply by seeing Kṛṣṇa, one very young, doe-eyed *gopi* cried profusely. It seemed her mind said, "O eyes, you have seen Kṛṣṇa. The other senses such as the ears are not deriving such bliss. So I consider you fortunate." Then her mind, melting in love, pressed the two eyes of Kṛṣṇa firmly in her embrace, causing her eyes to overflow with tears.

One *gopi*, stunned by the sight of Kṛṣṇa, stood like a golden statue. She defeated Kṛṣṇa by having more good qualities than the best of lovers in the three worlds. The whole body of one *gopi* broke out in goose bumps like a *kadamba* tree blossoming from top to bottom. It seemed as if the arrows of Cupid that had entered her heart during separation from Kṛṣṇa were extracted by a special mystic jewel known as Kṛṣṇa's kiss.

One doe-eyed *gopi*, perspiring in all Her limbs, appeared like a golden lotus covered with drops of dew. It appeared that upon seeing the moon face of Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of afflicted life airs, the moonstone of her mind had become liquid and oozed out from reflecting that moon light.

One *gopi*, her eyes darting hither and thither like a *cakora* bird and her body continually trembling from the sight of Kṛṣṇa, looked like a *campaka* vine blowing in the wind. It seemed as if the elephant king of desire had entered her body to shake the earth of her heart with his mad rampage. One moon-faced *gopi* with a voice sweeter than a cuckoo suddenly lost her voice upon

seeing Kṛṣṇa. She resembled a melodious *vina* gone out of tune due to damp weather.

One doe-eyed *gopi* pulled her crooked hair braid over her shoulder. While moving her eyes as if in fear of a snake, her eyebrows frowned. Then she threw back her braid with her veil and ran away. By this she hinted that Kṛṣṇa should place His arms on her shoulders. Seeing some bees flying in front of her, one *gopi* waved her hands playfully to shoo them away, and then gracefully covered her lips with the edge of her veil. This revealed her desire for Kṛṣṇa's kiss.

On seeing the face of Her beloved, one lotus-eyed *gopi* did not speak, move away, nor show any signs of bliss. She bent her head to indicate; "I know who You are." Being angry that Kṛṣṇa had come to give her more suffering, she peered at Him with reddish eyes. Feeling jealous, she placed her folded hands above her head as an offering of respect before leaving Him.

One *gopi* looked furtively at Kṛṣṇa as if to ignore Him, while placing her left arm near the shoulder of her companion. To prevent Kṛṣṇa from understanding her desire, she did not put her arm directly on her friend's shoulder. With a maudlin smile and her moving eyebrows shining in anticipation, she mumbled monosyllables. Though meaningless, these sounds held great meaning. The sounds indicated her pride, insult, jubilation, and yearning.

In a mood of humility and adoration, one *gopi*, her bangles tinkling, fanned the lord of her life with the edge of her upper garment. Due to experiencing ecstatic emotions, the cloth fell from her hand, yet she continued to wave her empty hand. "Lord of my life! How can You walk in the forest with Your tender feet, which are softer than lotus buds?" Saying this, one *gopi* took Kṛṣṇa's feet in her hands and massaged them.

In these verses, the *gopis* display all the natural emotional states such as trembling, being stunned, scratching the ear, stretching the body, embracing braided hair, and smelling a toy lotus to indicate their desires for conjugal enjoyment. Being submerged in the joyous lake of eternal elegance, the *gopis*, though having bodies made of spiritual love, became even more beautiful on seeing Kṛṣṇa. Even Sarasvati, what to speak of the less intelligent Brhaspati, could not describe their natural attractiveness, which

was filled with a powerful, variegated, and worshipable swelling sweetness. Revealing itself in delicious emotional states, this nectarean sweetness easily brought Kṛṣṇa under its control.

For harvesting His highest enjoyment, the son of the king of Vṛndavana broadcast a sweet mood in all directions. Then Kṛṣṇa, the delightful crown jewel of all lovers, arrived on the bank of the Yamuna. The pleasurable sparkling sands and the streams of soothing moonlight, resembling the brilliance of liquid silver, provided the perfect setting. The bees hummed a gentle tune. The soft southern breeze, like a virtuoso, taught the blue and red lotuses how to dance.

Kṛṣṇa looked like the full moon surrounded by the stars of the blissful *gopis*, who displayed the height of noble character. Completely imbued with all attractive qualities, the *gopis* were embodiments of Kṛṣṇa's internal potency. The pleasurable minds of the *gopis* swelled with currents of pride, greed, and jubilation arising from the waves of their youthful exuberance. With a keen desire to have Kṛṣṇa as their husband, the fortunate *sruti-cari gopis*, acquiring bodies suitable for that enjoyment, finally attained the fulfillment of their desires. Their heartache vanquished by the ecstasy of seeing Kṛṣṇa, the *nitya-siddha gopis* like Radha acted as if unaware of their own eternally exalted positions and thought of themselves in the same way.

The soft breezes cooled the bank of the Yamuna and artistically swayed the lotus petals, which were embraced by their lovers, the bees. The *gopis*, who are expert in amorous pastimes, arranged a seat for their friend Kṛṣṇa with their shawls that were as white as milk droplets or jasmine flowers, and fragrant with the *kunkuma* powder from their breasts. While smiling gently they said, "Let us sit here."

Kṛṣṇa happily sat on those attractive *asanas*. They far surpassed the seats arranged within the lotus hearts of the great masters of mystic meditation. Those seats defeated the opulence of the costly jeweled throne offered by the goddess of fortune of the three worlds, or the base created by Ananta Sesa, the turtle incarnation, or any other supporting energies. Sitting on those cloth seats spread on the sands of the Yamuna, Kṛṣṇa, with His broad chest, appeared like a prince enthroned by the goddess of fortune in the kingdom of enchanting pastimes made from the rarest jewels in the three worlds. While sitting on the bank of the Yamuna, which flowed by with

waters as black as ink, Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* looked like the moon encircled by the stars.

One group of *gopis*, adept at inducing the zenith of ecstatic *rasa*, massaged Kṛṣṇa's hands and feet with their loving lotus hands. Their soft hands showed drops of perspiration produced by the blows of sorrow caused by their unfathomable attachment. The fear, pride, and madness that recently attacked their hearts had disturbed their life airs. So while massaging Kṛṣṇa's feet the *gopis* sought relief by asking Him some intimate questions. Speaking in sweet gentle voices, they indirectly referred to their condition through a series of questions and answers.

The Word Play of Kṛṣṇa and the Gopis

[In this section the married *gopis* ask questions and Kṛṣṇa answers.]

Gopis: "Who has spotless intelligence (*ke amala buddhi*)?"

Kṛṣṇa: "He who has a soft mind (*ye komala buddhi*)."

Gopis: "Who is the greatest (*ke mahita*)?"

Kṛṣṇa: "One who is expert in love (*ye kamahita*)."

Gopis: "What is wasteful (*ki apacaya*)?"

Kṛṣṇa: "Intense anger (*kopacaya*)."

Gopis: "What is sweet (*madhura ki*)?"

Kṛṣṇa: "The full moon in spring is sweet (*madhuraka*)."

[Hearing Kṛṣṇa's clever answers, the *gopis* became disturbed. So squinting their eyes, they continued the dialogue.]

Gopis: "Although we are overcome by love, Your answers reveal that You have a harsh mind and are filled with anger. We can plainly see that in Your dealings. When Radha just said something trivial, You went away in anger. Today's full moon of the autumn season is much brighter than the full moon in spring."

Gopis: "Who is strong (*ke balabhaja*)?"

Kṛṣṇa: "The person who just worships (*kebala bhajah*)."

Gopis: "Who is learned (*ke santa eva*)?"

Kṛṣṇa: "Those who are not disturbed and remain happy always (*ke santah*)."

Gopis: "Who can enjoy the highest *rasa* (*ka sara rasa vilasa vilasati*)?"

Kṛṣṇa: "The lotus which stays in the lake (*kasara rasa vilasa eva*)."

[In this series, Kṛṣṇa asks questions and the *gopis* answer.]

Kṛṣṇa: “Who is to be worshipped?”

Gopis: “He who is filled with *rasa*.”

Kṛṣṇa: “Who is filled with *rasa*?”

Gopis: “He who is the shelter of *prema*.”

Kṛṣṇa: “What is *prema*?”

Gopis: “That which knows no separation.”

Kṛṣṇa: “What is separation?”

Gopis: “That by which one can no longer live. In separation from us, You did not show any grief at all. Therefore You must be without *prema*.

Because You are without *prema*, You are without *rasa*.”

Kṛṣṇa: “What is sorrow?”

Gopis: “Separation from a dear one.”

Kṛṣṇa: “What is the dearest thing?”

Gopis: “That which is rare and desired.”

Kṛṣṇa: “What is the rarest thing?”

Gopis: “What cannot be achieved even by any practice.”

Being the rarest, most desired, and hardest to attain, Kṛṣṇa is the dearest object for the *gopis*. The *gopis* felt sorrowful in separation from Kṛṣṇa. In this way, by playing with the various meanings of words, the *gopis* wove a fantastic fabric of bright syllables (colors) by moving the shuttle of clever questions and answers. Still even while worshiping Kṛṣṇa, they felt somewhat angry due to the intoxication of love. So very carefully they revealed their minds to the breaker of the cart.

The *gopis* said, “O joy of our eyes, now please give us answers on one topic. Some people reciprocate the love only of those who show love toward them, while others show love even to those who are indifferent or inimical. Yet others will not show love toward anyone. What person is being described in these three statements? O wearer of yellow garments! You are the most knowledgeable among all moving and non-moving entities. Please consider and give Your reply.”

The son of the king of Vrndavana, amazed at the *gopis*’ effulgence and the respect they had given Him, understood that this question, which revealed their great pride, had arisen from the jealousy caused by their unbroken love. Knowing this, Kṛṣṇa looked at them very sweetly with sidelong

glances. Then just to satisfy them, He gave a humorous answer imbued with a special taste that could revive a person from death.

Kṛṣṇa said, “O dear slender-waisted *gopis*! People who show affection for each other only to benefit themselves are actually selfish. They have no true friendship. Indeed, if they did not expect benefit for themselves, they would not reciprocate. Some people are compassionate toward all souls, or like parents, naturally affectionate. They lovingly serve even those who fail to reciprocate with them. O women with beautiful eyebrows! There are individuals who are self-satisfied (*atma-rama*), materially fulfilled (*apta-kama*), or by nature ungrateful (*akṛta-jnah*), or simply envious of superiors (*guru-druhah*). Such persons will not love even those who love them.”

After saying this, Kṛṣṇa laughed when He saw the *gopis* casting looks of disbelief at each other, rather than looking directly at Him. Then Kṛṣṇa said, “O greatly intelligent ones, filled with pure friendship! What kind of upside-down questions are you asking? I cannot have offended anyone by My answers. O doe-eyed *gopis*! Because I do not immediately reciprocate the affection of those who worship Me, nor do I show compassion to those who are indifferent, your first two clever questions do not apply to Me. I am also situated beyond the four types of people given in My answer to your third question. I am not *atma-rami*, completely self-satisfied and absorbed in meditation, for I have been attracted by your piteous conversations. Because of this I am also not *apta-kami*, free from any desires. For the above reason as well, I am not a *guru-druhi*, a cruel person hating those who help Me. For this reason too, I am not an *akṛta-jnah*, an ungrateful person.

“If you want to know why I did not respond to you when you worshiped Me, then please listen attentively to My answer and hold it in your hearts forever. I do not immediately respond or show Myself to those who worship Me, because I want to intensify their loving attachment to Me. They then become absorbed in remembering Me, just like a poor man, who has gained some wealth and then lost it, can think of nothing else.”

As the lotus flower does not fade in the sunlight, the *gopis* did not wither in the presence of Kṛṣṇa’s statements. Being bound in love by the wearer of the flower garland, the lotus-eyed *gopis* with pure faces just stood there without revealing a speck of their hearts’ pain.

Lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa said, “What We have spoken is for the ordinary person. It does not apply to you who are worshipable by all. One who has already achieved the limit of perfection cannot possibly go further. There is no one superior to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And there is no love greater than yours. O doe-eyed *gopis*! Just as rock candy is the final and finest product from processing sugar cane juice, similarly, can there be anything higher than the attraction that you have attained for Me? Though separated from your vision, I always remained within you. If that had not been so, then your life airs, which desired to leave your bodies, would not have been appeased.

“Please excuse whatever faults I have committed by acting too boldly. If sometimes the cloud does not serve the lightning (clouds sometimes appear without lightning), does that mean that the lightning will disrespect the cloud? Sometimes, the obstacles created by the lover produce a new, more favorable situation for the beloved. Though the intense heat of the sun produces sweat, the lotuses always feel bliss to their very core by the same heat.”

Kṛṣṇa delivered a dexterous display of words simply to cover His own defeat. Then in a choked voice, Kṛṣṇa spoke the highest truth, “O *gopis*! I am not able to repay My debt for your spotless service, even within a lifetime of Brahma. Therefore please let your own glorious deeds be your remuneration.”

Chapter Twenty: The Rasa Dance

The burning pain in the hearts of those fortunate *gopis*, who were the very life of Kṛṣṇa, had now been extinguished. Taking to heart the gentle, nectarean words flowing from the full moon of Kṛṣṇa's mouth, the *gopis* went almost mad as they caressed Him with their trembling arms. They desired to enjoy their lover who displayed irresistible attraction. With His incredibly gorgeous form, looking more beautiful than a hundred thousand Cupids, Kṛṣṇa served the *gopis* a continuous feast for their eyes. Then the enchanter the whole creation began His pastime of the *rasa* dance in order to fill the *gopis*' hearts with endless bliss. Kṛṣṇa wanted the *gopis* to perform the joyful Hallisaka dance to display their talents and individual mellows. Bharata Muni, the authority on mundane dramatics, describes Hallisaka as a circular dance that girls perform while holding their hands on each other's shoulders. Desiring to enjoy this dance, Kṛṣṇa spoke to His *gopi* lovers, who resembled the best jeweled flags.

Kṛṣṇa said, "O my beloved *gopis*! I derive great happiness from all of you. Now please hear My words with faith. See this auspicious expanse of naturally brilliant beach made by the Yamuna River, her heart bursting with pleasure. It is like a well-ploughed field devoid of pebbles and shining like camphor. Although there are many of you, see if you can make a circle there."

Hearing this, the *gopis* replied, "If we stand in a circle we will be far away from You. Our hearts are all trembling at this thought. Being so far away from You, we will not be enthusiastic, nor can we endure the sorrow."

Kṛṣṇa said, "Now just see the potency of My instructions. Though I will stand in the center of the circle with Radhika, I will also remain beside each of you rapidly twirling around in a playful mood."

Their doubts dispelled, the *gopis* became anxious to see the fun. In great happiness they joined hands and formed a circle around their beloved Kṛṣṇa. Their bodies seemed to merge into one form that spread out over the beach like circular waves expanding in an ocean of moonlight. That circle of all-attractive ladies looked like a golden net spread over the waters of eager love for catching the fish-like mind of Kṛṣṇa with the bait of ripe

tumbi fruits (their breasts). The *rasa* circle resembled a fortress of moonlight topped by the black flags of their swaying black braids, and decorated with golden pots shimmering in the reflection of their full moon faces.

The *rasa* circle looked like a huge earring decorating the ear of the goddess of the earth, or a golden bracelet of Manasottara Lake surrounding Sumeru (Kṛṣṇa), or like a giant bangle around the full moon of Kṛṣṇa. It looked like a potter's wheel rotating from the touch of a potter expert in Cupid's sports. It appeared like a circular grove of interlocked golden desire creepers decorated with dew drops of perspiration, springing up instantaneously without any seed on the camphor dust beach beside the Yamuna.

As literature is decorated with essays called *sarvatobhadra*, all forms of auspiciousness and happiness ornamented this dance. Like skillful poetry that can be read forward and backward, the *rasa* dance sometimes went one way and at other times the opposite way. As poetry is marked by equal flowing syllables, the dance progressed with balanced steps and no stumbling. As poetry is written in both local and Sanskrit languages, various statements and counter statements punctuated the dance. As poetry is ornamented with puns, which compress two meanings in one sound, tight embraces ornamented the circular dance. As poetry is adorned in alliteration, similarly, during the dance the *gopis* wore suitable clothing to accentuate the various movements of their hands and feet. As poetry is ornamented with repetition, so in the dance one Kṛṣṇa appeared as many. As poetry has both flowing and syncopated meters, similarly, the dance sometimes proceeded steadily and sometimes in a halting motion. As the eye has a black spot in the center, the circle of dancers had Kṛṣṇa in the center.

Without anyone's notice, Yogamaya dressed the *gopis* in beautiful clothing and ornaments perfectly suited for the *rasa* dance. Without knowing why, Kṛṣṇa felt overwhelmingly attracted to the *gopis*. Just see how expert Yogamaya is at satisfying Kṛṣṇa's heart!

At the beginning of the dance, the daughter of Vrsabhanu displayed the epitome of glory and beauty. Encouraged by the *gopis*, Radha stayed in the center of the circle with Kṛṣṇa. Standing like a picture, Radhika bathed in bliss as She watched the dancing expertise of the other *gopis*.

Fearing that they had become too spread out, the *gopis* gathered together again. As poetry may have the fault of looseness, the *gopis* placed their arms each other's shoulders in order to close up the gap between them. Then Kṛṣṇa, the king of pleasure, left the center of the circle and quickly entered between each pair of *gopis*. Releasing their locked arms, Kṛṣṇa placed His arms on the *gopis*' shoulders and danced with them, displaying fascinating poses.

Coming between the pairs of *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa first faced them and then hid behind their backs. Kṛṣṇa held their necks between His arms and moved about. By this, the *rasa* circle took on a spectacular appearance—like a firebrand twirling around, straight, then reverse, then zigzagging in motion. Kṛṣṇa's attractive dancing movements filled the *gopis* with desires to associate with Him.

Turning at full speed and putting His arms on the left and right shoulders of two *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa simultaneously embraced both of them. Making a space between the two *gopis* whom He had just embraced, Kṛṣṇa quickly moved behind them. Then taking His hand away from one, and using the shoulder of the other, He circled around again to face them. In this way the fun-filled *rasa* dance continued. Moving in this zigzag motion, Kṛṣṇa rapidly and skillfully went around to embrace each *gopi* from front and back. Kṛṣṇa's artistic dance of love filled His dearest *gopi* and all the others with ecstatic joy.

Overcome with impatience to witness the *rasa* dance, unlimited numbers of demigods and their wives crowded the sky with their hundreds of celestial airplanes, which looked like planets hanging in the sky. The horizon looked like an assembly hall filled with the Caranas, Kinnaras, Siddhas, Sadhyas, Gandharvas and Vidyadharas. The demigods played varieties of festive tunes and melodies to increase the pleasure of Radha and Kṛṣṇa. They accompanied the *rasa* dance with *muraja* drums, shaped like poems of the same name. They beat drums (*mrdanga*), made from pure clay devoid of rocks and other debris from the earth (*mrdanga*). They rang small metal cymbals (*panavas*) as plentiful as an exchange of coins (*pana*) in buying and selling goods. The drummers held the beautiful *alingya* drums in close embrace (*alinga*). They played brilliant *ankya* drums suitable for the various acts of a drama. The *anakadundubhi* drums equaled the

praiseworthy *Anakadundubhi* (Vasudeva) of the Yadu dynasty. The vibrations of numerous stringed instruments such as the *vina* (*vitata*) pervaded (*vitata*) the sky. The wind instruments (*susiram*) had needle-like holes (*sasusiram*), and the special drums (*anaddha*) were tied up (*sanaddham*) like precious jewels.

The celestial musicians showered so many flowers that the bees thought they were the *kajala*-tinged tears of the goddess of heaven. With hairs standing erect in ecstasy, the Gandharvas sang the glories of Yasodanandana. The rhythmic sounds of the anklets and bracelets of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* poured nectar into the ears of the *devatas* accustomed to drinking ambrosia, and destroyed their desire to taste anything else.

Kṛṣṇa submerged in unlimited bliss as He rapidly spun around between each pair of *gopis* and embraced them. When the circle of *gopis* combined with the single dark body of Kṛṣṇa, it conquered the beauty of the combination of moonlight and darkness, of lightning and storm clouds, of *campaka* and blue lotus flowers, and of gold and sapphires. Ceasing their zigzag movements, the dancers started turning in a circle. As they merrily danced, the *gopis*' veils rustled, their earrings swung on their cheeks, their coral necklaces swayed playfully on their shoulders, and their bracelets, waist-belts and ankle-bells tinkled delightfully. The *gopis*, flashing like stationary lightning, sent waves of light around the universe of cloud formations (Kṛṣṇa) whirling around in the dance.

Then something extraordinary happened. Making smaller circles, Kṛṣṇa danced close to Radha in the center, and then He expanded again to the circumference of the circle in order to dance close to the other *gopis*. Enjoying His pastime, Kṛṣṇa appeared like a roaming sapphire necklace, freed from its thread, in the jewel box of the circle of *gopis*. Impelled by the festive sight and desiring to dance like the blissful *gopis*, the goddesses of dancing, singing, and playing instruments appeared personally at the *rasa* dance. The presiding deities of music and dance had attained expertise in these arts after long practice. In a blissful mood, the teachers of music and dance worshiped those skilled dancers. They welcomed the arriving demigods of hand positions (*mudras*) who assist them in their productions.

As the *gopis* expertly sang and danced to the beat of the music, they displayed various *mudras* and enchanting bodily poses. *Mudras* are hand

postures that tell a story or act out the drama of the music. In the following list, the *mudra* is first defined and then explained with a metaphor. During the *rasa* dance the *gopis* exhibited all of these *mudras* to express their different moods.

- 1) Pataka Mudra (flag): like a beautiful flag flying from the mansion of a wealthy man.
- 2) Tripataka (three banners): like the smoke from the sacrificial arena, the flag of the sacrifice.
- 3) Hamsa Mastaka (swan's head): as tender as the lotus stem touched by a swan.
- 4) Kartari Mukha (*betel* nut clipper): a curved blade, like the thin moon on the second day after dark moon.
- 5) Suka Tundaka (parrot's head): brilliant, like the beak of a parrot, the color of the *palasa* flower.
- 6) Sandamsa: compressed like pincers pulling out threads of molten gold.
- 7) Khataka Mukha (suspicious face): like Siva holding a *khataka* (musical instrument) in His hands.
- 8) Padma Kosa (lotus bud): attractive as a lotus surrounded by eager bees.
- 9) Ahitunda Mudra: like a snake charmer skillfully holding a snake's head.
- 10) Suci Mukha (pinhead): like the head of the needle, plentiful in the tailor's shop.
- 11) Mrga-sirsaka (deer's head): like the constellation *mrgasirsa* during the full moon of the winter month.
- 12) Ardha Candra (half moon): like the moon on the eighth day.

After thanking the hand position *devatas*, the goddesses of the performing arts welcomed the *devatas* of songs and *ragas*. The *devatas* in charge of various styles of *prabandha* and *dhruva*, and of irregular intonation such as *harivilasa*, *svarartha*, along with various rhythms such as *caccatputa*, *caccaputa*, *hamsalila*, *gajalila*, *simhananda* (extensive *talas*), as well as *ekatali*, *rupaka*, *pratimantha*, *nisaru*, *yati*, *triputa aduka*, and *adi tala* were also in attendance. The music *devatas* of southern, *tailanga*, and western styles all gathered there. They received the *devatas* of *ragas* such as *malara*, *mallara*, *bhairava*, *kedara*, *nata*, *karanta*, *kamoda*, *sama*, *desaga*,

gandhara, bangala, and vasanta; the *devatas* of *raginis*: *gujjari, bahulagujjari, barati, desika, bhairavi, velavali, ramkiri, dhanasika, sri, pali, gori, todi, gondakiri, and kalyanika*.

They greeted the Lakshmi of singing and the *devatas* of text and music, the seven melodies (*svaras*), the twenty-one fading notes (*murcchana*), three scales (*grama*), eighteen scales (*jati*) and twenty-two marginal notes (*sruti*). They welcomed four types of instrumental *devatas*: wind instruments such *vamsi, muralika, pavika, upanga*; string instruments like *vina, mahati, kavilasika, vipanci, svara mandalika, kaccapi, rudravina* and *kinnari*; drumming instruments like *mrdu, mrdanga, damaru, dampha*; and percussion instruments like cymbals. They welcomed the different tempos: fast, slow and medium, and the body poses of dance. Among them appeared *devatas* such as *svaramandalika, vipancika, mahati, rupavati* holding lutes and others holding *tamburas*. Many singers with drummers, *vina*, and flute players joyfully appeared there. Many expert *karatala* players kept the rhythm. All these *devatas*, the embodiments of the performing arts, and the *Upanisads* of the arts, attended the *rasa lila* with smiling lotus faces and looks of astonishment.

The best dancers assembled there showing their expertise in both the improvised and the pure styles. They exhibited proficiency in all the secrets of music and graceful movements like a person who turns ordinary words into songs. Something more may be added. There are two types of songs, *marga* (song, dance and music according to the rules laid down by Brahma) and *desi* (regional). There are thirty-four types of *marga* and forty types of *desi* songs. In musicology, the *cancaputa* beat is famous. The recitation of beats (*bol*) sounded most attractive: *thaiya tatha-tatha-thaiya, tatha-tatha-thaiya-tathatti-tatha-thaiya, thaiya-tatha-tatha-thaiya, thaga-thaga-thaga-tattitha-diganathai*. Following this recitation, the rhythm keepers kept *karatalas* in their hands. Moving them left, right, up and down, they sang an attractive new eighth note, though there are only seven notes in the scale, playing in different measures (*laghu, guru, pluto, drat* and *virago*) sometimes with *bol* and sometimes without.

When the drummers raised a tumultuous sound by hitting the ends of the drums with their hands, their lips shone and their throats quivered. The female singers took on a splendor as they turned their ears towards the

sound of the instruments thundering with great skill. The seven notes revealed their beauty in four ways according to their placement in the tune: *anuvadi*, *vivadi*, *vadi* and *samvadi*. The *vadi* is like a king; it is used frequently and defines the *svarupa* or essence of the *raga*. The *samvadi* acts like the fifth note and is called the minister. Any of the other four notes may be the *vivadi*, or enemy. The remaining notes of the *raga* are called *anuvadi*, the followers of the king and minister.

The constituents of the *svaras* are called *srutis*, which are twenty-two in number named *tivra*, *kumudvati*, and so on. When these combine they form three types of *grama* (scales): *sadja*, *madhyama* and *gandhara*. When a *svara* (melody) fades into a *raga* it is called a *murcchana* (fading note). *Raga* develops by using *murcchana*. There are a total of twenty-one *murcchanas* (seven *svaras* times three scales) such as *pancama*, *rodri*, and others. All these *murcchanas* appeared during the *rasa-lila*.

Playing the *murcchanas* in ascent is called *tana*. There are forty-nine *tanas* (key notes). From them minor *tanas* arise. It is impossible to count their varieties. In the *rasa-lila* 300,000 *tanas* appeared. *Jatis* are the archetypes of *ragas*. There are seven pure *jatis* and eleven secondary *jatis*, a total of eighteen. Though only eighteen in number, seventeen thousand nine hundred *jatis* appeared in this *rasa* dance. There are three types of complete *ragas* appearing in fifty forms. By omitting and retaining notes many forms of *ragas* resounded within the *rasa* dance. There are six main *ragas* such as *sri* and *vasanta*, and thirty-six *raginis* (wives of the *ragas*) or derivative forms such as *mala*, *sri*, and *todi*. Unlimited varieties of *ragas* and *raginis* arise by mixing those forms.

In order to sing the *srutis*, *jatis*, *murcchanas* and the fifteen *gamakas* (trills or making a melody pulsate), Brahma supplied fixed and changeable tuning on the *vina*. While sounding the *vinas* to regulate the pitch of the *gopis*' voices, one wondered about the accuracy of the *vinas* tuning. Proud of their ability to test the pitch of voices, the *vinas* themselves became tested by comparison with the *gopis*' voices. The *gopis* sang a type of song called *suddha prabandha*. There are nine types of *suddha*: *adi*, *yati*, *nisaru*, *adda*, *triputa*, *jhampaka*, *manthaka* and *ekatali*. Then the *gopis* sang *dhruva* and *mantha* songs of the *salaga suddha* style using various irregular beats. They also sang *prabandha* songs.

Excitedly uttering the *bol*, “*thāiyā thāiyā tathā tathā thāiyā thāiyā thāiyā—tigara tā-thāiyā*, the *gopis*, stamping their feet on the ground and raising their arms in the air, danced sweetly from left to right, while going around the circumference of the circle. To further relish the singing the *gopis* made *mudras* to dramatize the words of the songs. As they gracefully turned their necks, their eyes darted from left to right glancing at Kṛṣṇa with looks of love.

Raising their arms high and shaking their bangles while spinning around, the *gopis* danced with lightning speed. Because they tasted such ecstasy within, they could not stop. Being strung on the thread of Kṛṣṇa’s beauty within their hearts, they flawlessly and continuously moved their feet to the left and right. While stamping their feet to the beat “*dhi dhidhi dhita dhidhi*,” their bodies swayed in time and their jeweled ankle-bells softly jingled. The cloth slipped from their breasts, and it seemed their thin waists would soon snap in half. But fearlessly, they swung their arms around and danced in joy, twisting left and right.

The *vina* and flute players also danced with precise steps. The singers and rhythm makers danced according to the beat of the song. The drummers played loudly and danced in unison. Their sound was like a thread tied to the bodies of the dancing *gopis*. When Kṛṣṇa turned to the left while moving around in the *rasa* circle, the *gopis* turned to the right. And when Kṛṣṇa turned to the right, they turned to the left. Dancing in this manner, they appeared as figures spotlighted by a moving lamp, which cast shadows first on one side then on the other side, as the combination of golden bodied *gopis* and dark blue Kṛṣṇa repeatedly reversed their positions.

The instrumentalists, situated outside the circle, assisted the pastime of the Lord by playing according to the dancing of the *gopis*. The *gopis* sang various songs about the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa, “the personification of all nectarean enjoyment.” In response, Kṛṣṇa sang about the beauty of the moon, “who brings pleasure to the night.” In a gentle *ragini*, the *gopis* sang, “His face is the abode of sweetness...”

As the beat picked up and the *gopis* stamped their feet harder, drops of perspiration fell from their lotus feet like honey on the sand. Astonishingly, the fury of the dancing did not raise a speck of dust. The image of Kṛṣṇa’s dancing, which reflected on the *gopis*’ *tilaka*, swayed to the rhythm of the

dancing *gopis* as they rocked their heads. The *gopis* seemed to be saying to that reflected image of Kṛṣṇa, “O skillful dancer, Your dancing can never, never, never compare with the splendid dancing of the *gopis* in the *rasa mandala*.”

At the end of the dance, all the lotus-eyed *gopis* tightly embraced Kṛṣṇa. Trembling in ecstasy, they sang another *raga* in loud voices, conveying their intense longing. The *devatas* of music all fainted upon hearing this *raga*. One *gopi*, joining Kṛṣṇa in His singing, sang pure melodious tones with full feeling in the *gandharva* scale made pleasant by suitable *jati*, *sruti* and *gamakas*. Pleased, Kṛṣṇa showed great appreciation for her performance, saying “Excellent! Excellent!” She pleased Kṛṣṇa by singing the seven notes of the scale embellished with twenty-two *srutis* presented with the principle ornaments in the introductory passages (*alapa*).

Hearing the *mrdangas* playing “*ta dhik ta dhik*” the dancers of the heavenly planets filled with cheer. Though critical of any competition, they filled with delight on hearing that sound. The *gopis* kept dancing and the instruments kept playing. Due to intense attraction to Radhika, Mukunda, swelling with bliss and pride, performed a solo dance exhibiting His eternal nature as the embodiment of *rasa*. Wearing a peacock feather in His hair, Mukunda showered the *rasa* dance in a cloudburst of nectarean *prema* by embracing Radha in His arms. Kṛṣṇa looked like a *tamala* tree embraced by a golden creeper, a cloud flashing with lightning, or like a perfect medicine produced by the goddess of amusement herself to bring satisfaction and to dissipate all lamentation.

The splendor of Kṛṣṇa’s elegance conquered the pride of a million Cupids. Like a magnet, Kṛṣṇa attracted the flower buds of Cupid’s arrows of love. Seeing Radha dancing with Kṛṣṇa, the other *gopis* wanted to enhance Her expert dancing, but they could not keep up with Radha’s proficient playing, singing and dancing.

This performance was not simply a result of practice, nor a show of expertise in learning singing and dancing, nor a momentary display of enthusiasm based on a little talent cultivated through repetition. Radha’s impeccable qualities are eternally present and eternally perfect. They do not depend on practice to manifest. Radhika’s natural perfection far exceeds that of all the famous women in creation. The dancing skills of Urvasi

cannot be compared to Radha's. What to speak of the other Apsaras who hide themselves in the pleasant waters of bashfulness before Radhika. In front of Radha, the wives of the Caranas retreated to the edge of the forest, the wives of the Siddhas gave up their pride, and the wives of the Gandharvas lost their noble character. Fixing their minds on the great fortune of Kṛṣṇa's intense love for Radha, the wives of the *devas* and *munis* sprinkled flowers.

In a mixture of joy, enthusiasm, and a desire to outdo each other, Radha and Kṛṣṇa, overcome with attraction, sang the *alapa* (introductory part) with the initial note (*graha*) and the sixth note. They sang all the notes of the ascending and descending scales with *gamaka* (trills or wavering). This invoked various tastes, induced more singing and dancing, and spread auspiciousness all around. It did not, however, appear to be a manifestation of any material skill.

As the rhythms faded out just before the end of the song, Kṛṣṇa concluded the song with the final note (*nyasa*), extending His lotus hand (*nyasa*) to touch Radhika's breast. Although intrigued by Kṛṣṇa's witty behavior, Radhika pretended to be angry and pushed Kṛṣṇa's hand away with Her left lotus hand.

Merciful Kṛṣṇa captivated all the *gopis* with the sweetness of His face and His broad, playful smiles, which gave rise to selfless love. Though Kṛṣṇa's heart overwhelmed with the desire for conjugal love, He continued to dance a little more, while swinging His head. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa moved to the outside of the circle and danced with the tribal Abhira women standing on the edge, and other times He moved to the center of the circle to dance with Radhika.

After relishing the dancing, Kṛṣṇa wanted to see the expertise of the *gopis* in performing other intimate pastimes. He stood before them, showing His radiant face and attractive arms while interacting with each one according to her individual rapture. Kṛṣṇa said, "O my beloved *gopis*! Now take sufficient rest for some time. Then we will see how to enjoy ourselves."

Saying this, Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* relaxed on the cooling, camphor-white sands along the bank of the Yamuna. The intelligent Yogamaya, Vrnda-devi, and her associates came there; knowing the time had come for their

service. They brought plenty of elegant and appropriate things to give to the *gopis*. With great affection they offered wild flower honey, cooling fruit juice in *palasa* leaf cups more attractive than jeweled dishes, garlands, and *betel* nuts, with a taste so satisfying and perfect that no ordinary person could have made it.

Kṛṣṇa forgot about His pastimes of eating on the riverbank with His cowherd friends. It occurred to Kṛṣṇa that He had now fulfilled His desire to picnic directly with the *gopis* on the bank of the Yamuna. Kṛṣṇa passed the time playfully eating with them in unlimited bliss. Intensely desiring to see the fun, Brahma and the other *devatas* did not go anywhere. But since they had previously offended Kṛṣṇa when He picnicked with His cowherd boyfriends, they did not have the courage to gaze on this secret picnic. Thus they raised their cloths to cover part of their faces.

After savoring the ecstatic *rasa* dance, Kṛṣṇa enjoyed in a different way in that solitary place, joking and laughing in the madness of love. Devoid of restraints, the ocean of *prema* in the *rasa mandala* swelled with high, unlimited waves. In that condition, Gopinatha and His lovers tasted the sweet fruits and nectar drinks. With great pleasure Kṛṣṇa sipped the cool water brought by respectful *vanadevis*. He relished the *betel* nuts flavored with camphor and *sara* root, which He held before His mouth in a unique way.

The wind passing over the Yamuna carried the scent of lotuses and the blissful sound of cranes and ducks as it blew gently on Kṛṣṇa's body. After drinking His fill of liquor before the battle, Kṛṣṇa left His sitting pastime with a desire to dance again in the artful battle of love. Standing up, Kṛṣṇa played an amazing *raga* in the *gandharva* scale on His flute. It so much surpassed His previous songs that even the expert musicians could not touch it. The *devatas* sang along accompanied by *mrdangas*.

Because it is impossible to describe the fantastic dancing of the individual *gopis*, the dancing of one *gopi* of Radha's group will now be described, from which everything can be understood.

As the voices and instrumental music blended in a pleasant way, one *gopi*, who embodied the essence of the art of dancing, stood up amidst the singers like the center of a flower surrounded by golden petals. When the beat fell

off, she appeared like a deity making a sudden appearance to the clanging of musical instruments. That *gopi* had a very thin waist and heavy swollen breasts. While bending her delicate left and right hands to show the *ardhendu* (half-moon) and *padmakosa* (lotus bud) *mudras*, she glanced slowly from right to left. Perspiring profusely, her body seemed to be as soft as molten wax as she moved gracefully executing difficult dance steps. According to proper method, she extended and contracted her arms while touching her waist, forehead, neck and knees, and forming *mudras* such as *hamsasya*. Dancing in this way, her waist became even thinner and her breasts more firm. Her braid licked her heels and the three lines on her belly disappeared.

When the beat stopped, she waved her hands in the air and suddenly bent her back in such a way as to conquer the beauty of the *campaka* flower bow of Cupid. Fixing her knees firmly on the ground and stretching her arms out to the sides, she twirled around with lightning speed. Her ornaments jingled, her necklace and earrings swung, and swarms of bees circled around, being attracted by the fragrance of her mouth. She appeared like a golden wheel spun rapidly by a mad potter. The combination of the pale luster of her gold necklace, the redness of her lips, and the blackness of the bees made an extraordinary picture.

While contracting her belly, dropping her sash, and expanding her breasts, this *gopi* dug her toes into the earth, straightened her legs and raised herself on her feet. Clenching her fists and pressing her thumb against her breasts, she recited the *bol* “*tathā tā-thāi thāi tā-thāi thāi tā-thāi*” in unison with the beat while ringing her bangles and ankle-bells. When the song finished she suddenly disappeared from the center of the circle and positioned herself on the circumference. While the voices, *vinas*, flutes, *karatalas*, and *mrdangas* resounded, this *gopi* stood behind the singers and rested her arms on the shoulders of a friend. While chewing *betel* nut, she extended her legs so that a friend could untie the strings of her ankle-bells. To relieve her fatigue her friends stood around fanning her with their shawls. Her breasts heaving, she took a few deep breaths and fell asleep.

After resting some time, she heard the singers expertly reciting the *alapa* to introduce a new song. Then she re-entered the *rasa mandala* like Cupid personified. Illustrating the song with intricate *mudras*, she danced so

enthusiastically that Siva became inspired to perform His *tandava* dance. Her thumb had the best of beauty, her forefinger excelled the pride of Cupid, her middle finger defeated the grace of the universe, her ring finger defeated the pride of Cupid's wife, and her little finger established the meaning of colorful expression.

This *gopi* with beautiful teeth, raised firm breasts, and nicely shaped buttocks, waved her hands, exciting her golden bracelets to jingle attractively. She raised her knees and arms in turn to the beat of “*tat-tā tā-thāi tiki-dā tiki-thāi*.” This golden *gopi* appeared like a continually rising golden light as she twisted and turned higher and higher. She appeared like a stream of golden pollen stirred up by a storm amongst a group of lotuses composed of singers and musicians.

As she swayed in the sky like a glowing vine, she displayed many complicated movements. Indeed, this did not arise from dance lessons. As the essence of gracefulness, her feet never touched the ground. If a group of lightning bolts from a cloudless sky remained stationary for a long time swaying in the breeze and roaring with the beat “*tat-tā tā-thāi*,” it might compare with this *gopi*'s dancing. As the beat subsided and her footsteps softened, this *gopi* with full breasts swayed her body back and forth, revealing the perfection of beauty in her upper limbs. Her friends feared that her thin waist, unable to bear the bending, would break like a tender lotus stem. When her golden ankle-bells signaled the beginning, she danced with great skill. Moving her feet to the different beats (*laghu*, *guru*, *pluta*, *druta*, *drutata*, and *ardha drutapada*), she rang all her ankle-bells. Sometimes she jingled only a few, and sometimes not even one bell sounded. Pleased with her, Radha and Kṛṣṇa cheered out, “Very good! Very good!” and embraced her. This *gopi*'s spectacular performance astonished the assembly of Apsaras and *devatas*.

After watching each *gopi* dancing in this way, Kṛṣṇa commenced His performance. Displaying inconceivable dancing prowess, He moved with abandon along with all the *gopis*. Abounding in joy, He sang and danced and induced the *gopis* to sing and dance. Dancing in this way the night passed in an instant, although it extended for the length of Brahma's night. In this extraordinary *rasa* dance, sometimes the *gopis* danced alone or in a

group. Sometimes they danced singly in turns, or joined with Kṛṣṇa to sing and dance a duet.

Feeling both tired and extremely satisfied from the blissful *rasa* dance, the *gopis* opened their bodices and rested their arms on Kṛṣṇa's shoulders. The *gopis* looked as gorgeous as golden creepers hanging on the branches of a *tamala* tree caressed by the breeze. Embraced by the exhausted *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa appeared to be the embodiment of conjugal *rasa* embraced by the embodiment of ecstasy.

One *gopi*, with swaying necklaces, lotus bud earrings, and an elegant dress, put her left arm on Kṛṣṇa's shoulder. As her belt and ankle-bells chimed along, she sang and danced in a slow, artistic manner. Kṛṣṇa danced after her, following her movements. One love-excited lotus-eyed *gopi* grabbed the border of Kṛṣṇa's golden *dhoti* in her lotus hand, and danced back and forth while pulling it and making Kṛṣṇa dance in response.

Another *gopi*, charged with emotion, sang and danced in an even tempo responding to the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. In a mood of jest, Kṛṣṇa intentionally played some dissonant notes. With her glance that *gopi* chastised Kṛṣṇa while at the same covering her own discordant notes. The *gopi* said, "Kṛṣṇa! You are playing out of tune to distract me and point out my faults. I know Your tricks. Your gestures reveal Your intention to make me sing out of tune!"

After dancing for a while to His flute song, one *gopi* induced Kṛṣṇa to dance proudly by singing and playing her *vina*. Just for fun, in the middle of the dance, Kṛṣṇa moved with a complicated, irregular gait. Becoming very impatient, the *gopi* thought, "That Kṛṣṇa is not going to make me laugh and miss the beat."

Thus Kṛṣṇa gave pleasure to all the young ladies of Vrndavana by embracing them, glancing lovingly at them with His playful smiles, kissing them, and drinking the nectar of their lips. All the different *gopis* present at the *rasa mandala* got a chance to dance and individually enjoy with Kṛṣṇa. In this way, the *gopi* group leaders, their followers, and maidservants all relished the greatest ecstasy in the *rasa* dance festival.

Fatigue personified came as a friendly *sakhi* to decorate the *gopis'* foreheads with beads of perspiration that looked like attractive strings of

pearls. Their limbs hung loosely from lethargy as if they were drunk from liquor. But even in their exhaustion the *gopis* looked elegant and effulgent. Her body drooping from weariness, one *gopi* draped her arms on Kṛṣṇa's shoulders. Not being able to bear the weight of the mountain of her good fortune, she had to load it on the shoulders of her lover in order to rest for some time.

After getting intoxicated on honey wine, one *gopi* completely discarded her bashfulness. Brimming with affection, she went mad to enjoy without restraint. She looked particularly beautiful due to shaking from the fatigue of bearing the weight of her heavy breasts. Upon her shoulders Kṛṣṇa placed the jeweled batons of His arms, whose natural blue-lotus fragrance mixed with that of the sandalwood pulp anointing them. As the *gopi* relished that fragrance, she submerged in an ocean of ecstasy. Then riding the high waves of satisfaction, she kissed Kṛṣṇa's arms.

Next to Kṛṣṇa's cheek one tired *gopi* put her own, beautified by effulgence of her jeweled earrings, which glittered as she danced. Admiring her soft splendid face, Kṛṣṇa kissed her and slowly offered His chewed *betel* nut to Her honey sweet lips. Though they were exhausted, some exceedingly elegant *gopis*, inspired by the auspicious fragrance of Kṛṣṇa's body, continued to sing and dance. In doing so, their bodices heaved with their heavy breathing, their necklaces moved like billowing waves, and they moved in frivolous ways. While they danced like this, Kṛṣṇa grabbed both their breasts with one hand. It appeared like a blue lotus covering two golden water pots. Being so closely set, touching one breast equaled touching the other.

The ears of the lotus-eyed *gopis* moistened with drops of perspiration from the exertion of dancing and singing. As the intense dancing gradually slowed down, the tinkling of their jeweled ankle-bells ceased. Then another enthusiastic *gopi* stepped forward to dance with Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by her pleasant singing, precise movements, and the delicate vibrations of her ankle-bells.

Although the long night of Brahma passed away, the joyous adventures of intimate love raged on. Kṛṣṇa sported like an engrossed boy with members of the groups assisting the performance of the *rasa* dance. As expansions of their group leaders, these *gopis* embodied portions of individual arts and

skills. Kṛṣṇa, the source of Narayana, smiled, talked to them, embraced them, kissed them, and drank the nectar of their lips. Kṛṣṇa performed all these loving pastimes simply to fulfill the desires of the *gopis*. The doe-eyed girls with thin, creeper-like arms swam in the river of desire for Kṛṣṇa, inundated by the delight of directly serving Him. In the *gopis*’ ecstasy, their hair, bodices, and clothing had unknowingly loosened.

The *devatas* headed by Siva and Brahma praised the son of the king of Vṛndavana, the Supreme Person, who stole the minds of all beautiful women in the universe, who is endowed with all wonderful qualities, and who is always absorbed in His pastimes of love. The wives of the *devatas* fainted simply seeing Kṛṣṇa from the sky. What an astonishing, incomprehensible pastime! Even the stars in the sky, caught in the whirlpool of love manifested there, lost their intelligence, became attracted by the desires of their minds and fainted. From its very beginning, the *rasa* dance disturbed the movements of the moon. The night served Kṛṣṇa’s desire by lasting as long as Brahma’s night.

Following the *rasa* dance, Kṛṣṇa enjoyed with each *gopi* in separate solitary bowers. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* were mutually attracted to each other. Thus Kṛṣṇa satisfied each *gopi* to the limit of her desires. Kṛṣṇa’s love displays a wonderful sweetness in union. With His tender lotus hand Hari affectionately wiped the drops of perspiration from the beautiful faces of the smiling *gopis*, who had tired from the varieties of love sports. But the touch of Kṛṣṇa’s hand saturated their minds with ecstasy, and made the *gopis* perspire even more! Seeing His lack of expertise in this matter, the *gopis* themselves took pieces of cloth and wiped their own faces. Then the *gopis*, who had exhibited their talent in performing enthralling dances, sang some unique self-composed songs, which were charmingly sweet, evoking compassion, and endowed with exquisite beauty.

Playing in the Yamuna

To dispel the *gopis*’ fatigue from dancing and exhaustive conjugal pastimes, Kṛṣṇa entered the Yamuna, followed by swiftly moving, singing bees. Their lengthy pastimes on the bank had covered Kṛṣṇa and all the *gopis* with dust. With great enthusiasm they entered the lotus-filled currents of the Yamuna

River. Kṛṣṇa looked like a lordly elephant playing in the water with his consorts.

While bathing in the Yamuna the exquisite lotus faces of the *gopis* defeated the beauty of thousands of lotus flowers, their thin arms defeated the lotus stems, their full, rounded breasts defeated flocks of *cakravaka* birds, and their graceful flowing movements defeated the flocks of swans gliding on the water. When the *gopis* submerged themselves up to their necks, the sky filled with the golden lotuses of their faces. Upon touching their pot-like breasts, the river rose in waves to serve those pairs of *cakravaka* birds. Their many slender arms hanging down in the river appeared like hundreds of lotus stems.

Smelling the fragrance of the *gopis*' bodies, the swarms of black bees gave up the lotuses and soared towards the *gopis*. It appeared as if the black Yamuna had come to respectfully greet them. When the swans flapped their wings, it appeared that out of affection the Yamuna fanned the tired *gopis*. When swarms of black bees gathered above them and the *devatas* showered white flowers, it appeared like strings of pearls sewn on a dark blue cloth, shaking in the wind.

Keeping their beloved in the center and making a circle around Him, the *gopis* hit the water while holding their hands together. This caused little waves to rise from the Yamuna, which in turn splashed against the chest of Kṛṣṇa. The waves looked like the hairs of Yamuna's body standing on end in ecstasy. Interlocking their fingers, the *gopis* gathered water in their hands and forcefully splashed Kṛṣṇa.

It appeared that Hari had been wounded by the power of Cupid's water weapon. Knowing that Cupid's weapon could not be destroyed, but it could be counteracted, Kṛṣṇa dove under the water. Moving His hands, Kṛṣṇa playfully snatched the sashes of the *gopis*. Pretending to be afraid, they jumped up and ran away as Kṛṣṇa pursued them splashing water. After quickly defeating the *gopis* in the water fight, Kṛṣṇa grabbed all their necklaces as booty and stored them under His armpit. Radha secretly approached from behind, loosened Kṛṣṇa's arm, and seized the necklaces.

Radhika tried to hide amongst some golden lotus flowers but was afraid of the deep water. Radha looked fearfully when Kṛṣṇa discovered Her hiding

place and swam toward Her. Coming up from behind, Kṛṣṇa suddenly placed His hands firmly on Radha's breasts and lifted Her up. The other *gopis* just stared in amazement at His behavior.

Radhika startled when some restless *saphari* fish (minnows) suddenly brushed against Her legs. Out of fear, She clutched Kṛṣṇa's neck and embraced Him again and again. Then Radha glorified the genuine friendship of the *saphari* fish and broke out in a tender smile. While some *gopis* competed to pick lotus flowers and stems they laughed and felt no distress. They faced but one difficulty—the desire born from the bliss of seeing Kṛṣṇa, who happily witnessed their actions. Afflicted thus, they appeared to be stupefied from a beating.

When Kṛṣṇa approached these *gopis* and tried to caress their *cakravaka* breasts, they crossed their arms in front. Their crossed arms looked like lotus stems embracing their throats. The *gopis* appeared to be sniffing lotuses as they shyly covered their faces with their lotus hands. In this way, by various gestures, the intensity of passion grew in the water games between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis*. While drenched in the *ghana rasa* (water, or *srngara rasa*) the *gopis'* *kunkuma* ran off their breasts, their necklaces broke, the *kajala* washed off their eyes, their lips lost their red color, their jeweled belts came undone, and their hair braids loosened. In this condition, the luscious beauty of the *gopis* doubled. This is the nature of persons drowning in the pleasurable waters of *madhura rasa*.

After offering their precious gems and jeweled ornaments to the Yamuna River as a gift, the *gopis* fashioned earrings of spotless water lilies, hair ornaments of lotuses, necklaces of lotus stems, and belts of *saivala* plants. Their bangles tinkled when they scooped up water in their left hands and slapped them with their right hands to imitate the music of frogs. Thus the water pastimes met a fitting close.

After rubbing oil on their bodies, the golden-hued *gopis* bathed and then climbed up on the bank of the Yamuna. They looked very beautiful with their loosened undergarments and dark locks of hair dripping with water. It appeared as if the bright rays of the moon, pursued by dense darkness, now retreated and wept. The *gopis* towel dried their bodies and put on ornaments, clothing, and cosmetics supplied by the all-auspicious Yogamaya, who is always active and expert in supplying the right things at

just the right time. While dressing themselves the *gopis* took on the role of women who dominate their lovers (*svadhina bhratrka*). With their pleasing complexions and dangling earrings, the *gopis* looked like the goddesses of fortune. Intelligence judges them as the topmost reservoirs of *prema* and the abodes of sweetness covered with festive joy.

Surrounding the supreme enjoyer and Lord of their lives, who wore an elegant crown, a *kaustubha* necklace, and other effulgent ornaments, the *gopis* entered the courtyards of the forest *kunjas* along the Yamuna, which resounded with flocks of singing swans and other water birds. The *vanadevis* provided delicious, fragrant *madhu* (honey liquor made from flower extracts) in jeweled pitchers. Intoxicated by the fragrance, swarms of bees flew in from all directions and circled overhead. Though lit by full moonlight, the evening sky appeared darkened by their presence. Illumined by the moonbeams, the strand of beach looked like a silver band and the crystal wineglasses looked enchanting. Because the moonlight and the crystal glasses glistened with equal intensity, one could distinguish them only by touch and not by sight.

Gazing at the intoxicating beverage in front of the *gopis*, Kṛṣṇa paused a moment to ponder its specialty. To better understand how it causes intense madness and varieties of bewilderment, Kṛṣṇa eagerly drank the *madhu*. Joking with the *manjaris*, Kṛṣṇa said, “O beautiful eyed women! Fill the crystal cups and freely distribute this delightful drink to all the group leaders.”

After giving Kṛṣṇa His share, the *manjaris* distributed the rest. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* sat on the bank of the Yamuna, which was purified by the lotus-scented wind and washed by the nectar of the full moon’s rays. The *madhu* appeared to be all-attractive due to its reflecting the image of the moon in the crystal glasses, the presence of the intoxicated bees circling overhead, and the sweet fragrance of full-blooming lotuses emanating from the drink. It is a well-known fact that drinking *madhu* produces amazing effects. With the first sip the eyes become bloodshot, with the second sip words stop, and the third sip makes a person fearful of harmless objects and fearless before danger. Knowing the characteristics of *madhu*, the assembled *gopis* were reluctant to drink it and show these amusing symptoms for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. Nevertheless, the *gopis* sipped the strengthening potion (*madhu*

increases one's virility and amorous prowess) as they approached the battlefield of love.

The beautiful faces of Radha and Kṛṣṇa looked like a combination of a nectar-filled moon and a honey-filled lotus. Drops of *betel* nut juice stained Their lips with an attractive reddish hue. While drinking the *madhu*, Radha and Kṛṣṇa also sipped the nectar of each other's lips. As the festival progressed, Kṛṣṇa became as proud and uncontrollable as an intoxicated elephant. Kṛṣṇa, who is the infinite ocean of bliss and the precious jewel of sweetness, abandoned all discrimination as He played madly with the *gopis*. Appearing intoxicated, Kṛṣṇa listened to Himself without speaking. The *gopis* quenched their thirst with their first sip of *madhu*, and with the second sip they felt stupefied. They conversed with the *manjaris* in drunken voices. Noticing the reflection of the moon in her glass, one *gopi* asked, "Hey *sakhi*! Is the moon drinking up my liquor?"

While fanning her, a sober *manjari* replied, "He is not only drinking your *madhu*, but he is stealing the beauty of your face as well. It has already gone down his throat. Quickly bite him with your teeth, for he is immortal anyway."

The *gopi* replied, "O, I will not drink his leftovers!" Then she drank some *madhu* and threw away the glass.

Another garrulous *gopi*, with slurred incoherent words, tightly grasped Kṛṣṇa and said, "O, look, the sky is f-f-falling! Ooh! The earth is t-t-turning! O Lord, please h-h-hold me! My body is shaking! I will fall o-o-over!"

Seeing the reflection of the bees swarming over her glass, one intoxicated *gopi* said, "This is the dregs of the wine." Then she poured the wine into another glass to remove the dregs before offering it to Radha.

Being totally intoxicated from drinking *madhu* and the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's association, Radhika looked extremely attractive as She repeatedly addressed Kṛṣṇa as "O lady friend!"

Radhika said, "O lady friend!"

Playfully matching Her mood, Kṛṣṇa replied, "Yes, O Lord of my life!"

Radha said proudly, "You are called Hari because You are a thief and You take away all women."

Kṛṣṇa said, “O Kṛṣṇa, be gracious towards Me.” [Actually Kṛṣṇa meant to say, “O Radha, may You be happy.”]

Becoming angry, Radha replied, “O lady friend Syame, has Kṛṣṇa met you?” [Radhika intended to say, “O Kṛṣṇa, has My friend met with You?”]

Kṛṣṇa said, “O Lord, I worship You.” [He meant to say, “O Radha, I worship You alone. There is no one else in this world but You.”]

Radha and Kṛṣṇa bewildered Cupid with Their inverted conversation caused by drinking *madhu*. After some time the intoxication of the liquor wore off and They recovered their self-awareness. The lethargy, dizziness, and so on from being intoxicated caused a lessening of desires. Now Radha and Kṛṣṇa entered a state of transcendental madness in love wherein inebriety decreased and desire increased. In this way the beautiful *gopis* of Vrndavana spent the night, which lasted as long as Brahma’s day, intimately associating with the Lord of their lives.

Thus the crest jewel of enjoyment, whose body is made of intense bliss, revealed His playful pastimes of love in the company of the Vraja *gopis* who are expansions of His personal potency known as *hladini sakti*. Since the conjugal affairs of materialistic men are devoid of spiritual *rasa*, the poetic works written about them are all useless productions. Therefore Kṛṣṇa displayed His transcendental pastimes to show the perfection of such activities. Cupid also attained success by assisting Kṛṣṇa’s divine pastimes in Vrndavana.

The multitude of stars in the sky, which seemed like the remnants of flowers showered by the wives of the *devatas*, looked like the fading morsels of the moon’s repast. The pearls of the night queen had been torn from their strings and scattered about in play by her consort the moon. Now, the night collected them again. The remaining stars in the sky looked like the last stray pearls, which gradually disappeared as the night drew to a close.

The moon appeared like a silver ship traveling from one continent to another on the ocean breast of the sky. Being trapped by the counter winds of the *rasa-lila*, that ship could not move forward for a long time. When the *rasa-lila* subsided, the ship again moved and soon arrived at its destination in the west. As the moon and stars gradually disappeared, the long night,

feeling sorrowful due to its impending separation from the Lord, appeared ready to give up its body. The wives of the *devatas*, their hearts being pierced by the lance of separation, also disappeared from the sky.

Though the night had been as long as a day of Lord Brahma, upon the conclusion of the *rasa* dance at the end of that night, the *gopis* returned to the homes of their “so-called” husbands. Their husbands, however, did not find any fault in them, for Yogamaya had made duplicate copies of each *gopi*. The husbands took these forms to be their wives. These duplicate *gopis* spent the whole night sleeping next to their husbands. Thus the “so-called” husbands never actually had any intimate contact with Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental consorts known as the Vraja *gopis*!

For Kṛṣṇa, the possessor of unlimited energies (*saktiman*), and the *gopis*, the embodiments of His *hladini sakti*, there is no question of immorality in His enjoying His own *svarupa sakti* manifesting as the forms of the Vraja *gopis*. However, to nourish the taste of His pastimes, Kṛṣṇa’s relationship with the *gopis* seems to be unchaste illicit love according to the conventions of mundane society. The deep attachment Kṛṣṇa has for His beloved Vraja *gopis* is never seen in the Lord of Dvaraka and Rukmini, or the Lord of Vaikuntha and Laksmi. The full taste of *rasa* that Kṛṣṇa experiences in the *parakiya-bhava* (paramour love) of the Vraja *gopis* far exceeds the *rasa* tasted in the *svakiya-bhava* (wedded love) of His Queens in Dvaraka.

The *parakiya bhava lila* (the *rasa-lila*) is not simply a temporary manifestation. This perfectly pure transcendental pastime is eternally going on, even though it may be invisible to our eyes. Kṛṣṇa displays this marvelous pastime in the material world just to bestow His mercy upon the conditioned souls. Anyone who faithfully hears or describes Kṛṣṇa’s *rasa-lila* with the *gopis* will attain inestimable good fortune. Among literary works, those about Hari are sweet, but those describing Kṛṣṇa in Vrndavana are the sweetest quintessence of nectar! As the Ganga forever flows, among the topics of Kṛṣṇa the *rasa-lila* is the ever-flowing embodiment of bliss. May my mind always swim in that river of nectar.

Chapter Twenty-one: The Pastime of Stealing Kṛṣṇa's Flute

After enjoying the *rasa-lila* in the autumn season, Kṛṣṇa relishes the pastimes of Holi and having His flute stolen which take place in the spring season.

One night, Govinda and Rama (Balarama) went to the forest of Vrndavana to enjoy the pastime of Holi (festival of throwing colors), which is enacted either in the morning or evening. The skillful festival performance exactly matched the local customs. The *devatas* were very enthusiastic to observe this celebration. Seeing the astonishing beauty of Kṛṣṇa holding His flute, and wearing a fresh garland, glittering garments and ornaments, the *gopis* tied Him up in their hearts and sang His glories in charming voices.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarama, and their dear cowherd boyfriends performed this pastime amongst the splendid *gopis* of Vrndavana who are clever and skillful at playing Holi. The two brothers, however, out of respect for each other's moods of love, played separately with Their own groups of *gopis* whose minds relished the association of their respective lovers.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarama sang a special *alapa* in a *raga* with great devotion. Their artistic vocalizing of the appropriate notes and embellishments produced waves of continuous joy. Under the influence of the Holi festival, the land of Vrndavana, having revived its strength after the long cold winter, looked beautiful and auspicious. To begin the festival, the young ladies of Vrndavana, who are adorned with all wonderful qualities, and whose bodies looked attractive smeared with natural ointments, shyly held water in their hands and offered it to the land of Vrndavana.

The cowherd boys and their associates sang lovely songs in *dvipadika* and *carcari tala*. Their traditional Vraja *bhasa* songs sounded as pleasing as the smell of musk. The accompaniment of *karatalas* and sweet *mrdangas* enhanced the charming vibration of their bangles and ankle-bells. Kṛṣṇa and Balarama played in this way for a long time, and then wandered around in the lonely forests, pleasant with rows of young trees. The only signs of life in that deep forest were the maudlin cries of the peacocks piercing the evening sky. The rays of the moon filtering through the leaves of the trees

painted the forest floor with beautiful colors. Illumined by the moonlight of spring, the splendid forest atmosphere easily aroused the sweet mellows of conjugal love.

Haladhara (Balarama, the holder of the plow) looked extraordinarily elegant moving with His own group of young *gopi* consorts. One golden earring enticingly danced on Balarama's cheek and His eyes rolled from drinking *varuni*. With His dark blue *caddar* half falling off His camphor white chest, Baladeva looked like the white moon breaking through the darkness. For some time, Baladeva, who is a talented artist, danced to the beat of songs in *carcass* and *dvipadika*. Appearing like the personification of bliss, Balarama sang, laughed, and threw *kunkuma* powder on His beloved *gopis*, as if sprinkling the *sindura* of love on their foreheads. Backed by the *vina*, Baladeva loudly sang a song in *dvipadika*. Then in a joking mood, He threw colored powders on the restless-eyed *gopis*. Balarama mixed with His many *gopi* group leaders and their companions in the same way that Kṛṣṇa enjoys with His *gopis* like Radhika, Lalita, Candravali, Syama, and Bhadra.

Kṛṣṇa meanwhile defeated the *gopis*' long-standing pride of their singing skill by playing sweetly but indistinctly on His flute. The *gopis* responded by surrounding Kṛṣṇa and dousing Him with *kunkuma* while their bangles jingled joyfully. While tolerating the showers of *kunkuma*, Hari hung His head down submissively like the best of youthful, intoxicated elephants, and continued playing His flute song in *carcari tala*.

As Kṛṣṇa playfully moved with heroic steps, He met with Balarama who rambled about like an intoxicated elephant along with His own group of enraptured young *gopis*. These *gopis*, who were completely attached to Balarama, gazed at Him with tender eyes, conveying their affection for their beloved consort. Lifting their bangle-laden arms, they sang according to the beat and sometimes induced Balarama to sing along. While their ankle-bells tinkled in time with the nimble movements of their feet, the *gopis* danced beside their beloved Balarama, and threw *kunkuma* powder on His body with great delight.

Understanding the hints from Kṛṣṇa's glances, the cowherd boys bombarded the *gopis* with red, white and yellow scented powders. Balarama's *gopis* ran away fearfully. Seeing their condition, Kṛṣṇa smiled and mocked them by playing merrily on His flute. Kṛṣṇa's *gopis* laughed

along in sweet tones. While clapping their hands with a strong beat and bellowing “Ho! Ho! Hee! Hee!” Kṛṣṇa’s friends filled the four directions with robust laughter.

His anger and passion enflamed, Rohininandana, roaring like a wild young bull elephant suddenly spurred to competition, chased Kṛṣṇa’s companions to defeat them with a deluge of powders. Glancing forwards and backwards like lions stalking prey, Kṛṣṇa’s girlfriends desired victory. But losing their intelligence, they could not decide whether to attack or to retreat, so they all ran away. When Kṛṣṇa’s *gopa* friends counter-attacked Baladeva, He laughed as He squeezed them in His strong, snake-like arms and covered them with colorful powders. In the pleasure of playing, Kṛṣṇa’s cowerd boyfriends lost all sense of awe for Baladeva, as they shouted at Him with contorted faces. Being very strong, they managed to get free from Baladeva’s grip. Gathering in a group, they fearlessly retaliated with a volley of vermilion flower bombs. Though defeated, Baladeva remained fearless.

Kṛṣṇa, bathing everyone in the glow of His soft, sweet smile, said, “What you have done is not right. I do not like it. It is ungentlemanly to gang up on My brother who is all alone.” Hearing this, all the boys calmed down.

Moved by the emotions of comedy, pride and anger, Baladeva’s complexion assumed a ruddy hue to appear like a diamond pillar embraced by red lotuses. The majestic form of Balarama shone like a huge crystal bud reflecting the red *jaba* flower, or like a proud pinnacle of ice touched by the pink of early dawn. Baladeva looked as elegant as a mountain of white lotuses covered by a forest of pink lotuses inhabited by *cakravaka* birds. He looked like a full moon anointed with vermilion, glowing in the red evening sunset. Seeing Him thus, Balarama’s *gopis* surrounded Him and amused Him with blissful singing and dancing as they wandered off together.

Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa’s *gopis*, their hearts full of longing and drunk with the potion of love, enhanced the festive atmosphere with various amorous gestures indicating their conjugal desires. Conspiring together they planned a theft. The *gopis* said, “How can we steal that flute, which is like a snake scented with *aguru*, from Kṛṣṇa’s strong arms? What will Kṛṣṇa do without His flute? Is it a good idea to put our beloved into depression? But when the flute is in Kṛṣṇa’s hand, it acts like a lance to cleverly pierce our hearts with

its sweet, enchanting melody. Therefore, we must get that flute in our hands!”

Smiling surreptitiously, the lotus-eyed *gopis* continued whispering among themselves, “We cannot take the flute in Kṛṣṇa’s presence. Nor does He ever put it down. Even in a state of confusion, He does not let go of it. Among these three possibilities, we must find some way to steal it. The third possibility, taking it out of Kṛṣṇa’s hand when He is bewildered, is the strongest.”

In order to bewilder Kṛṣṇa, one expert *gopi* met Radhika in a lonely place and confided, “O fortunate Radha. If You really want to take Kṛṣṇa’s flute under Your control, then put on a show of obstinacy for some time. The impudence of Kṛṣṇa’s flute playing will flee, and the skill of our singing will become prominent.”

After the *gopis*’ secret talk, Kṛṣṇa’s close friend Kusumasava, though not knowing their complete plan, boldly spoke to Kṛṣṇa. Combining shrewdness with the fragrance of the flowering creeper of frank talkativeness, Kusumasava said, “O friend! Listen! Though the *gopis* are very learned, their singing cannot match Your ambrosial flute playing. So out of jealousy, they are planning to steal Your flute. To prevent this You should keep Your flute with me and sing in a loud voice. The *gopis* will not be able to approach me because of the power of my *brahminical* austerities.”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “O friend! We have fully witnessed the great strength of the *brahmanas* in the pastimes of your spring festival. Without a doubt, it seems that today you will show us the festival of protecting the flute as well.”

Kusumasava said, “O friend! I cannot protect the flute as much as that person who has given You the ability to attract everyone by the special power of his *mantra*. But one cannot see such a person in this world. So what is the question of someone trying to take Your flute? Do not mistrust a dear friend like me.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “What will you do if the intensely frenzied *gopis*, due to being overpowered by bliss, just snatch the flute from your hand? How will you get it back?”

Kusumasava replied, “You will see the power I have gained from penance.” Then taking the flute and tucking it under his arm, he said, “Please sing a song.”

In a voice conquering the sound of the *vina*, Kṛṣṇa sang a song in *carcari tala* with great artistry. The Yamuna stopped flowing in her stunned condition, the trees rained tears, and the birds and animals trembled in ecstasy. Hearing the song, the deer felt blissful and licked up the drops of perspiration behind each other’s ears. It seemed that the streams of sweetness from Kṛṣṇa’s song entered the ear holes of the deer and then oozed out due to finding insufficient space. The expertly composed *raga* pleased the ear due to its precise *srutis*, *jatis*, and seven notes.

Kusumasava proudly boasted, “O how wonderful! My friend, I have never heard such strong singing in the *carcari tala* in all my years! O arrogant *gopis*! You cannot sing songs with *alapa* that give such happiness.”

Sangita Vidya, a learned *gopi* musician, said, “O unintelligent one! If Lalita, who is wearing a gorgeous silk *sari*, can sing better than Kṛṣṇa, then crooked-minded fellow you will lose the flute. Let the flute be the wager.”

Kusumasava said, “O learned one! Only I know the science of music! It is difficult for an ordinary person to know, even if engaged in constant meditation on the subject. According to my final judgement, I will proclaim the winner at the appropriate time. This will please the *devatas* and be agreeable to all.”

Sangita Vidya, said, “O learned *brahmana* boy! This is not simply chanting the *Vedas*, which satisfies the Vedic scholars. Who are you to judge this?”

While smiling, Kṛṣṇa continued singing and hinted with a glance. Understanding His intentions, Kusumasava said, “O vain woman! If you do not agree that my knowledge of music is sufficient for judging, then we should agree that the singing of both parties is equal. Let us see if your singing, like Kṛṣṇa’s, can stun the Yamuna water, bring tears to the trees and creepers, and make the birds and animals tremble in ecstasy. I am certain that no one can sing as zestfully as my friend. Therefore we will wager the flute! If you want to gamble over the singing, then to be fair, you must offer Radha as a wager from your side.”

Lalita said, “O stupid boy! A fool makes the whole world insipid! In all gambling matches, the stakes must be of equal value. We can never equate glass with gold!”

Kusumasava responded, “O worshipable one! Do you think that my dear friend’s flute is like glass, and that your friend is like gold?”

Lalita answered, “Is there any doubt? If you want equal stakes, then without fear you should wager your friend.”

Kusumasava said, “All right then, begin singing. Since I am totally pure in heart, I will wager my friend.”

Then Lalita, her throat reddened and her eyebrows dancing, gave up all shyness to sing a gentle *kedara raga* with boldness and enthusiasm. Lalita clearly enunciated a variety of *gamakas* (trills) spanning from lower to higher octaves, ascending and descending. Using the full grandeur of the *gandharva* scale, Lalita easily surpassed the expertise of the Gandharvas and vanquished their pride. After feelingly singing the *alapa* (without *tala*) in *kedara raga*, Lalita sang a song in a pleasing tempo according to the conventions of musical taste in the *maharastrian* dialect.

Lalita sang, “The brightly shining moon of Syama, the nectarean disc endowed with all arts, is expert at giving bliss to the lotuses, and in agitating the ocean of *prema*. Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of Vrndavana who wears a crown of mango buds while fondly sporting in the spring, is partial to His girlfriends.”

With great pride, Kusumasava held his arms above his head and pranced about while blurting out, “Hee! Hee! You are defeated! O, Lalita has been defeated!” Unseen, Kṛṣṇa’s flute slipped from Kusumasava’s armpit and fell on the ground. Without anyone in the universe knowing, Sangita Vidya quickly snatched it up and hid it. Overwhelmed with vanity, she did not even tell her friends about it.

She spoke to talkative Kusumasava, “Listen, Why are you so happy over something that never happened? You are prancing around like a madman. Your friend with the fickle ankle-bells should consider who is the actual winner!”

Kusumasava replied to Sangita Vidya, “O one respected by the learned! According to me, your defeat is evident, for the wager was laid for singing

in *carcari tala*. Lalita sang only one little fragment in *dvipadika tala*. O one with a happy face! Please consider, has she been defeated or not?”

Hearing this, Lalita and Sangita Vidya broke out in laughter. Sangita Vidya said, “O uncouth one! What is remarkable about *carcari*, *dvipadi* or *jambhali*? The attraction is in the use of *murchana*, *svara* and *grama*. Lalita’s song displayed the epitome of sweetness. Indeed, just see! The jewel basins under the trees have melted into water due to the strong currents of her song. By its nature this water has spread out around the bases of the trees and solidified as sitting platforms.

“It is true that from your friend’s song the Yamuna looks divine, the trees of Vrndavana become conscious, and the birds and animals seem fully alive. But by our friend’s song, they have all become petrified like hard rock. Therefore we have won. Bring your friend and hand Him over to us!”

Subala-sakha said, “O Sangita Vidya! How is it that you have become covered with foolishness like an ignorant person? With such intelligence can you understand music? Did it not occur to you that it is impossible for this boy to wager Kṛṣṇa and give Him away? It is an accepted rule that a person can wager only one who is His dependent. No one can wager and give away the Lord.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “Kusumasava! Now you cannot command the respect of others! You have been defeated by these girls, who are proud of their victory and mad with the intoxication of the festival. You will fall into an inescapable condition. Therefore you had better give the flute. Otherwise, My flute will go along with you anyway.”

Kusumasava said, “O friend! But I have won! Showing Your strength, You should snatch away their dear companion.”

Lalita said, “Unabashed you are! Hard working ass! Dullard! We have wagered on the song I sang and the song proclaims my victory.”

Kusumasava said, “Friend! Greedy woman! If you speak in such an arrogant way, then take the flute which I have hidden.” Saying this, He looked for the flute but could not find it. “O friend! Out of fear, the flute has run away from my arm pit to some safe garden with unbroken creepers.” When he said this everyone broke out smiling.

Killing Sankhacuda

Meanwhile, Balarama enjoyed throwing colors at His beloved *gopis*. At that time, a foolish demon named Sankhacuda, a lowly Yaksa servant of Kuvera with no sense of propriety, brazenly tried to rob the jewels of Balarama's *gopis*. As if called by death, he leaped in front of them. Sankhacuda resembled a man delirious from the hot sun, leaping from a tall tree into the mirage of an oasis of cooling water produced by the rays of the sun. He appeared like a foolish grasshopper jumping into a fire while thinking it to be the effulgence of a forest of succulent herbs. He resembled a frog leaping at a snake in order to grab the jewel on his hood, or an antelope approaching a lion with the idea that his shining mane is a field of ripe grains.

With a crest jewel firmly fastened to his turban, Sankhacuda raised his arms and frightened the girls. Trembling like deer seeing a powerful wolf, the *gopis* cried out, "O Balarama! Kṛṣṇa! Please protect us!" Before Balarama heard those painful cries, Kṛṣṇa quickly stopped His Holi pastimes and instantly went there. The Yaksa fled in haste, but Kṛṣṇa ran after him so quickly that His feet did not appear to touch the ground. Balarama, angry at the disturbance, also ran after him. Seeing heroic Kṛṣṇa and Balarama in hot pursuit, the rascal hurled the dirtiest insults and discarded the jewels. Filled with anxiety, Sankhacuda rapidly fled for his life as if mounted on an airplane. Displaying intense anger, the demon roared while running away, and then he started shaking from exhaustion.

As Kṛṣṇa chased the demon wherever he went, He looked like the king of lions running down a regal elephant, or Garuda chasing a snake, or like a hawk pursuing a crow. That best of all men, who happily pleases His surrendered servants, grabbed the Yaksa by his hair. Though Kṛṣṇa's hand is as soft as a lotus, it becomes as hard as the back of a tortoise when He makes a fist. Using His fist, Kṛṣṇa removed the wicked demon's head along with his crest jewel. It was a high quality effulgent gem of fine workmanship, pleasing to look at, and famous for its beauty. Feeling excessive delight, Kṛṣṇa gave the jewel to His elder brother as His consorts looked on.

Kṛṣṇa Searches the Gopis for His Flute

In a playful mood, Kṛṣṇa met again with His beloved *gopas* and *gopis*, who are expert at singing proper scales, notes, and fading notes. Kṛṣṇa celebrated His eternal pastimes with these eternal associates, the personified touchstones of all the pleasure arts. Kṛṣṇa's meeting them resembled a sputtering wick regaining its bright flame by adding a new supply of oil, like a dried up pond filling with water during the monsoon season, or like a dilapidated palace restored by repairs.

Pretending to search for the flute, Kṛṣṇa made false accusations while approaching different *gopis*. Accosting one *gopi*, Kṛṣṇa said, "You are the thief." Going to another, He said, "You are the thief. You are the one who has stolen My precious flute." Coming up to Candravali's assistants, whose hearts melted with love, Kṛṣṇa rudely ripped open their bodices to search for the flute. They responded by scolding Him with frowning faces and charming smiles.

The *gopis* said, "O associate of Kusumasava! Such bad conduct is just what we expect of You! How could the flute slip from Your hand and hide in our bodices? If we have stolen Your attractive flute, then You may punish us severely. But if it is not true, then we will take Your necklaces and *kaustubha* jewel as a wager."

With great pride, Candravali said, "O arrogant fellow, who gives pain to women! Kusumasava has forcibly taken that flute, which we wanted to steal, from your hand. Don't You remember?"

Kusumasava said, "When you say 'the flute we wanted to steal' you show your intention to steal it. What proof have you that I forcibly took the flute?"

Candravali replied, "All the witnesses are here."

Kusumasava retorted, "They are all my enemies."

Candravali said, "Your friend there is also a witness."

Kusumasava said, "That cannot be true. Then why did my pure-minded friend open your clothing to look for it? Therefore, it is certain that you ladies have stolen this best of flutes. Your statements have proven to be downright lies."

After speaking like this, Kusumasava, who is clever, fearless, and effulgent, again spoke to Kṛṣṇa, "Sangita Vidya, the goddess of music, has stolen

Your flute, not these *gopis*.” Hearing this, the clever Sangita Vidya became afraid and with a graceful gait went to see Lalita. With a sly glance, she passed the flute to Lalita without anyone’s noticing.

Seeing Sangita Vidya’s gestures and movements, Kusumasava said hotly, “Friend! This Sangita Vidya has really stolen the companion of Your hand, the flute. She definitely took it! When we jokingly mentioned her name, intending it to mean the presiding goddess of musical knowledge, she took it as meaning herself, and thus felt fearful. That is the sign of the thief.”

Hearing this, Sangita Vidya stepped forward while Lalita hid the flute behind her back. With an astonishing smile Sangita Vidya said, “O little boy! What is this? You are a big pit of deceit. How could I ever steal the flute while playing in the Holi festival? You are heartless. What use have I in stealing the flute? If you accuse people of lying, please understand that you are committing a serious sin. You talk too much! You are the incarnation of injustice. It is not necessary to speak such false words. So go away! Today I have been merciful and spared you from punishment!”

Everyone broke out in mild smiles upon hearing her words. Kṛṣṇa, smiling all the while, derived more pleasure from boldly attacking the *gopis* while searching the flute than from His intimate pastimes with them. Surrounded by the *gopis*, who could not be submissive because of their innate bold natures, Kṛṣṇa, wearing forest flower garlands, finally stopped the search.

Disregarding Lalita’s show of pride that always manifests newer and newer features, Kṛṣṇa touched her with His lotus hand. Lalita, a master in all arts, secretly slipped the flute into the hand of the daughter of Vrsabhanu. Then devoid of fear she spoke without hesitation.

Lalita said, “O killer of Agha! Though I am innocent, You insist on touching me, due to being mad with the pride of love. I will stop this display of impudence born of Your pride. I am not lying. I do not have Your flute.” Saying this, Lalita opened her bodice to prove it. Showing her brilliant white teeth as she smiled, Lalita continued, “O one under the spell of pride and lust! Please remember that when You ran after Sankhacuda, possibly Your flute fell to the ground. Your attempts to corner me have proven fruitless.”

Kusumasava said, “O friend! The thief must be Radha!”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “Intelligent one! It must be as you say. Radha has the flute so I will search Her!”

Just when the crest jewel of witty behavior started to search Radha, a dear girl friend of Balarama happily presented the Sankhacuda crest jewel to Radha, saying, “O Radha, endowed with all qualities! Listen to me. Balarama is offering this jewel to You, so please accept it.” The incredible effulgence of Sankhacuda’s crest jewel lit up the heavenly planets. It brought more happiness than the eight mystic *siddhis*.

As Radha gladly extended Her hand to accept the jewel, Her bodice slackened and the flute fell on the ground. Kusumasava’s face lit up. He slapped his armpits, twisted his neck, stepped in a crooked manner, contorted his body, clapped his hands, and laughed in a raucous voice. Surrounded by His laughing, boisterous friends, Kṛṣṇa smiled and ridiculed Lalita.

Kṛṣṇa said, “O Lalita! Unrepentant one! You have spoken truthfully. While running after that demon, My flute, seeing our preoccupation with the jewel of Sankhacuda, felt neglected and fell on the ground. Now, seeing Radha’s preoccupation with the same jewel, My flute has again become angry and fallen on the ground.”

Kusumasava said, “Such intelligence of Brhaspati cannot be found in anyone of Your age. It is not astonishing that Radha, whose perfect, faultless, and auspicious form takes away my friend’s intelligence, has also stolen His enchanting flute whose form is inauspicious and full of holes. But Kṛṣṇa, the amazing thing is that You saw that I had taken the flute from You, so how did they get it? O friend, with the hue of a *tamala* tree, now please take Your celebrated flute.”

Damodara, rejoicing with pleasure, took the flute and played it sweetly. And as the beautiful *gopis* displayed various symptoms of ecstatic bliss the festival came to a close.

Chapter Twenty-two: The Swing Festival Pastimes

The stealing of Kṛṣṇa's flute occurred in the middle of the springtime Holi festival. On another day, Kṛṣṇa performed the swing festival (*jhulana yatra*), which is the perfect object of meditation for those desiring a taste of devotion. On that day, the sweet pastimes of Radha and Kṛṣṇa far surpassed the sporting of the demigods and their wives in the celestial gardens. This chapter describes Kṛṣṇa's ecstatic swing festival, which is incomprehensible to the three worlds.

The swing festival was held in a special place in Vṛndavana, which was bordered by a line of desire trees of equal height, with round trunks and branches whose ends intertwined, leaving a bare space in the middle. The line of trees appeared like a wall of sapphire jewels. Besides the birds inhabiting those trees, the presiding deities of the forest had placed various items in the trees including *camaras*, silk cloth, long strands of pearls, jewels, fruits and flowers. A square shaped golden stage stood in the center of the decorated trees. In the middle of the stage was a jeweled *kunja* with four doors. Four *haricandana* trees stood as pillars in the corners of the *kunja*. The intertwining of the tree's upper branches formed an overhead canopy. The swing hung on thin golden ropes tied to the branches of the *haricandana* trees. This arena appeared in the center. Each *gopi* group leader had a personal *kunja* with a swing in the four directions radiating from this central arena.

The other arenas, lined with pleasant *devataru* trees, radiated green all around and resonated with the singing of young cooing birds. They served as embodiments of festivity for the entire earth. One swing hung from each pair of trees, and sitting platforms for the *gopis* encircled the bases of these trees. Golden chains tied securely to the branches of the trees hung down in straight lines. In the center arena four lines of swings belonging to different group leaders faced the four doors of the main *kunja*. Herds of deer frolicked about joyfully in the flat, open land surrounding the *kunjās*. The hearts of everyone immediately flooded with joy just by seeing these areas, which were illuminated by *cintamani* gems and by trees as brilliant as coral.

The top branches of the trees joined to form natural, pleasing green canopies. Gazing upward forever one could not find the tops of those tall trees.

The moonlight filtering through the canopies of the trees made small filaments of light on the forest floor that looked like piles of sesame and rice. Thinking it food, the female deer tried to lick it. The four *kunja mandapas* (raised platforms) were so similar that even the *devatas* could distinguish them only by their placement in different directions. In those areas, the *vanadevis* had stretched a canopy in preparation for the swing festival.

The scattered moonlight appeared like pearl belts taken from the deities of the directions, broken by the steady wind, and broadcast on the earth out of respect for the land of Vrndavana. It appeared as if all the stars in the sky, in great bliss, left their positions to come offer respects to the land of Vrndavana. Pieces of rustling silk cloth from the goddess of the sky formed the rooftops of the *kunjas* and hung down quivering like tongues trying to lick the dust of Vrndavana. The nets of pearls hanging from that cloth were swinging gently in the soft breeze and pleasantly resounding like tinkling ankle-bells.

The forest gods had decorated the canopies with strings of various kinds of fruit, and with fine scented *camaras* resembling white lotuses born from the sky, or swans flying up from the lake of moonlight. The swing arena carried the celestial scent of aromatic *aguru* fumes, drops of perfume squeezed from the *kalpa druma* trees, and piles of camphor dust, which made lines of white smoke in the sky. Impatient and anxious to begin the swing festival, the *devatas* and their wives, the Siddhas, Vidyadharas, Caranas and Kinnaras played their instruments as they arrived in Vrndavana in their innumerable celestial airplanes.

In a jubilant mood the gentle goddesses from different forests, carrying various festival ingredients in their hands, assembled in Vrndavana. With friendship, kindness, and all good qualities they finished decorating the swing arena and built an impressive entrance with the best garlands. From all directions, flocks of joyful birds came fluttering to broadcast the sweetness of the swing festival. They perched peacefully on the twigs and branches of the trees around the arena. Eager to see the wonderful swing

festival, the birds sang the glories of Kṛṣṇa while their own hearts swung in delight. Forgetting all troubles and impelled by curiosity, varieties of deer gathered in the *kunjas*. They stood as motionless as figures in a painting.

Appearing as if they had not been attracted to the forest by the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, had not abandoned their household duties, and not opposed their elders, the doe-eyed *gopis*, like touchstones for pleasurable pastimes, suddenly manifested out of nowhere, as if coming directly from the desire trees. Colored with *kunkuma*, their loins glistened ready for dancing. They wore fluffy petticoats, covered by fine silk dresses extending to their ankles. Glittering bodices beautified their breasts. Their effulgent bodies were adorned with festive colored sashes and tinkling waist-bells.

The soft rounded shoulders of the *gopis* rivaled the flower bow of Cupid. The *gopis* had tucked flower arrows in their girdles and held flower bombs in their hands. In the arena of the artful amusing swing pastimes, the blissful *gopis* appeared like the incarnation of Rati (the goddess overseeing festive love battles). Some *gopis* had flower pollen sachets hidden in their golden waist-belts. Those bags of pollen seemed like the accumulated wealth of their skill in lovemaking, collected over a long period of time, for purchasing the jewel of Kṛṣṇa's mind.

Some *gopis* held thousands of flasks filled with fragrant *aguru*, musk, camphor, and sandalwood ointments. These thin, delicate flasks would break open with a breath. Others carried ingeniously designed syringes filled with flower essences, *kunkuma* water, sandal water, and musk water. The *gopis* looked like well-armed soldiers ready for the battle of love.

Anxiously awaiting the arrival of Radhika-Syama to start the festival, each of the *gopis*, the jewels among women who are more beautiful than the soldiers of Cupid, thought that she would swing first. The *gopis* entered the four areas around the main arena while discussing this among themselves. Out of excitement they made a din with their loud laughing that resembled the sweet cooing of the cuckoos.

Kṛṣṇa entered the swing arena with His left arm resting on Radha's shoulder holding His flute. In His right hand Kṛṣṇa twirled a lotus flower while His bangles chimed happily. A pleasing peacock feather topped His reddish turban that tilted attractively to one side. Kṛṣṇa's elegant earrings

and ear lotuses swung in the breeze created by the bees circling His head. Fine cloth kissed His limbs, lit by the jewels of His crown and bracelets. Kṛṣṇa shone attractively with His pearl necklaces tinged red from the rays of His *kaustubha* jewel. Light delicate footsteps accented His graceful yet playful gait. Jeweled anklets and bells adorned His lotus feet.

Kṛṣṇa, His splendid lips shining, appeared somewhat drowsy from chewing *betel* nut. Yet His effulgence easily defeated the combined radiance of all the jewels adorning the ladies in heaven. Kṛṣṇa's effulgence took the shape of a jeweled mace to announce His entrance into the bower of jeweled trees. As Kṛṣṇa and His servants ascended the dais surrounding the swing, the birds screeched, "Victory! Victory!"

The trees and creepers felt such rapture that their limbs erupted with tiny bumps and honey streamed down like a torrent of tears. When the peacocks stared at Radha and Kṛṣṇa they thought they were seeing dark rain clouds flashing lightning. Though knowing Radha and Kṛṣṇa from before, due to their unprecedented love, the peacocks madly cried out, "Keo? Keo?" (Who are these two persons?)

Different celestial denizens joined Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* to celebrate their *jhulana lila*. In attendance there were charming Caranas, male and female Kimpurusas, and the wives of the Siddhas beating expertly on *madala* and *panava* drums with their delicate hands. The spotless heavenly damsels from Svarga and the Apsaras directed by Urvasi held *camaras* as radiant as waves in the Mandakini River. They showered fragrant flowers from the Nanda-kanana gardens, which glittered like stars as they fell through the sky.

In this atmosphere, Kṛṣṇa mounted the attractive, comfortable seat of the swing. Kṛṣṇa looked like a regal crest jewel sitting on the cotton seat. The cloth covering the seat was whiter than the foam that appeared during the churning of the milk ocean. Shining pillows also adorned the beautiful seat. Seeing that amazingly wonderful swing purified the vision, and empowered the eyes to see other objects in a fresher way. While the *devatas* played sweet music, Mukunda and Radha marveled at the intricate workmanship of the jeweled lamps illuminating the swing.

Trembling out of ecstatic love, Radhika and Her friends sat beside Kṛṣṇa, who rested His left arm on Radhika's shoulder. When the Lord ascended the exquisite swing and displayed His sweet beauty, which defeated the fickle currents of a river of nectarean beauty, the *devatas* and their wives lost all composure. As the ardent desire of the *devatas*' hearts to get a closer view of the Divine Couple moved out of their hearts to express itself, it choked their throats. With that hope they left the middle sky and descended to the more favorable lower borders of the sky.

When lotus-eyed Candravali and other *gopi* group leaders beheld the especially intimate feature of Kṛṣṇa sitting upon the swing, their eyes sparkled with blissful love. The *gopis*, adorned with colorful makeup and tinkling belts, mounted their respective swings and loudly sang sweet songs in the appropriate tempo. Candravali and her group sat facing Murari, Bhadra and her associates sat on His right, Syama and her followers on the left, and Dhanya and her assistants sat behind Murari.

Crowding the four outer yards, other joy-filled *gopis* sang melodious songs with the finest artistic skill. Their effulgent complexions conquered a garden of golden creepers. As they softly vibrated their seven-stringed *vinas*, the *gopis* produced pleasing ambrosial music of unequalled excellence. Holding on with one hand and swinging their bodies, the *gopis* moved gaily on the swings as swarms of bees followed them.

With their free hands the *gopis* took fistfuls of powder from the bags tucked in their belts and forcefully threw it into the air while their bangles jingled along. Scattered here and there by the wind, the colored powders spread a red hue through the sky, like a screen of fresh *java* flowers. The *devatas*, anguished by this obstruction to seeing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, repeatedly showered flowers to remove the recurring screen of dust. It appeared the clouds dripped flower-nectar.

As the *manjaris* gracefully pushed the swings, Vrnda and others shouted, "Jai ho! Jai ho!" While blissfully absorbed in swinging, Radha and Kṛṣṇa hurled colored powders on the *gopis*. When Candravali and other *sakhis* returned the volley with their powders, Radha and Kṛṣṇa revealed a unique state of fresh beauty. As the powders thrown at Kṛṣṇa blew away in the wind, the *gopis* filled their reddened hands with sandalwood powder and other fragrances to bomb Kṛṣṇa again.

Radha's friends, who were experts in shooting *pichkaris* full of sweet smelling colored water, assembled around the swing of Radha and Kṛṣṇa. Suddenly Candravali and her *sakhis* attacked Radha and Kṛṣṇa with *pichkaris* full of color. With their jeweled-*pichkaris* loaded with scents and glittering like the moon, Radhika's *sakhis* counterattacked Candravali and her group with a fountain spray of color. Aimed mainly at Candravali, that spray of liquid scent did not even once touch the bodies of Radha and Kṛṣṇa. Gathering their forces, Radha's *sakhis*, who were eager to win the battle, shouted, "I am winning! I am winning!" In the pandemonium, a few more *gopis* picked up *pichkaris* and wildly squirted other *gopis*. In the excitement to win, some bottles of liquid fell and broke, releasing thick streams of *aguru* and sandalwood scented liquid over the ground.

When the flower bombs being forcefully thrown from all directions came too close to the son of the king of Vrndavana, the *gopis* deflected them. If, however, any bomb happened to hit the dark blue body of Kṛṣṇa, Radhika happily wiped it off with Her soft hand moistened from perspiration. Feeling disturbed, Kṛṣṇa lost His composure upon seeing the condition of the *gopis*. He was afflicted with pride and apprehension.

To increase the pleasure of the doe-eyed *gopis* who gazed at Him with shy, downcast eyes like *cakoris* agitated by the moon, Kṛṣṇa abandoned all rules of formal conduct and followed the whims of Cupid. Witty, humorous, and controlled by His consorts, the brother of Balarama, rolling His eyes in desire, challenged the groups of *gopis* facing Him on all sides, eager to play Holi with Him.

Skillful at sport, Hari smashed the *gopis* in the southern direction with a deluge of colors. While moving on their swings and firing red powder at Kṛṣṇa, the beautiful *gopis* appeared as victory flags of cleverness. Then Kṛṣṇa subdued the playful, blissful girls on the northern side. Next He defeated the *gopis* and their associates in the western direction, who kept swinging the whole time while strongly desiring pastimes of enjoyment. Their eyes and bodies defeated the beauty of lakes full of lotus flowers. Then He conquered the elegant, excited women on the eastern side, who were particularly attractive being seated on swings directly opposite Him. While swinging and throwing ruby-red powder with His lotus hands, Kṛṣṇa shared a seat with Radhika who possesses the limit of all excellent qualities.

After winning the battle of Holi, Kṛṣṇa, smiling brilliantly, desired to please the different groups of swinging *gopis*. Starting in the eastern direction, He faced each group and dexterously moved His swing in two different directions. When Kṛṣṇa swung east or west, He moved the swing directly towards the *gopis* in those directions. When He swung to the north or south, those *gopis* sat next to Him. In the joy of such counter swinging, Kṛṣṇa's necklaces, forest garland, and shining earrings all joined in the festival.

Sri Kṛṣṇa enacts two types of eternal pastimes: manifest and unmanifest. With the description of Radha and Kṛṣṇa's swing festival, I, Kavikarnapura, the crest-jewel of *rasikas*, conclude the book entitled *Ananda Vrndavana Campu*, which parallels the Vrndavana pastimes of the Lord described in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. I have not described the *Bhagavatam* chapters about the Gopis Songs in Separation, the Killing of Arista and Kesi, the Coming of Akrura, and Entering the Arena of Kamsa because I consider them unsuitable to the sweet mood of *madhurya* Vrndavana.

The confidential pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of transcendental wonder, are eternal by nature and constantly present in their manifest and unmanifest forms. What is the proof that Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode of Vrndavana exists eternally, though invisible to the material eye? In answer to this query, the *Srimad Bhagavatam* states:

***jayati jana-nivāso devakī-janma-vādo, yadu-vara-pariṣat svair
dorbhir asyann adharmam
sthira-cara-vṛjina-ghnaḥ su-smita-śrī-mukhena, vraja-pura-
vanitānām vardhayan kāma-devam***

“Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is He who is known as *jana-nivāsa*, the ultimate resort of all living entities, and who is also known as Devakīnandana or Yaśodānandana, the son of Devakī and Yaśodā. He is the guide of the Yadu dynasty, and with His mighty arms He kills everything inauspicious, as well as every man who is impious. By His presence He destroys all things inauspicious for all living entities, moving and inert. His blissful smiling face always increases the lusty desires of the *gopis* of Vrndavana. May He be all glorious and happy!” (SB 10.90.48)

The eternal nature of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is established by using the present tense in the *Bhagavatam* verse quoted above. It should be understood that

the eternality of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is preserved by His inconceivable energy (*acintya-sakti*). This spiritual energy produces both manifest and unmanifest abodes. One cannot say that Kṛṣṇa, who possesses inconceivable energy, does not have the power to maintain eternal places of manifest and unmanifest pastimes. Nor can it be said that His young lovers, the lotus-eyed *gopis* of Vrndavana, cannot be divided into different groups such as *nitya-siddha gopis* and *sadhana siddha gopis* like the *sruti-caris* and *muni-caris*.

Nor can Vrndavana, the place of His transcendental pastimes, exist in an unmanifest state. Why can't the pastimes of Hari in Vrndavana be both manifest and unmanifest eternally? O person fond of arguing! Give an answer to this one question. Do the manifest and unmanifest pastimes exist eternally and simultaneously? There are millions of universes, and as a particular pastime ends in one universe it simultaneously manifests in another. If they do not start in a particular universe, what is the question of disappearing? According to this method, the manifested pastimes remain eternally, always situated at some particular place. It is just like the sun, seemingly moving through days and nights, and appearing sequentially in all the seven continents.

Although a pastime seems to disappear in one universe, it actually continues to exist there in unlimited unmanifest forms. It reveals itself through different characteristics as described in Sanatana Gosvami's *Brhad-Bhagavatamṛta*. How could one Kṛṣṇa simultaneously enter different temples to marry each of the sixteen thousand women along with the inhabitants of Dvaraka, and also manifest Himself in many forms along with forms of all His elders such as Vasudeva? Just as Kṛṣṇa, without any assistance from His expansions, manifested many forms of Himself and His associates in Dvaraka, could He not also manifest such things in Vrndavana?

The *Srimad Bhagavatam* conclusively proves that Kṛṣṇa is full of unlimited powers. Though He stays eternally in Vrndavana (unmanifest), He goes off to Mathura. In His unmanifest form Kṛṣṇa stays in Vrndavana and eternally performs pastimes with the *gopis*. Kṛṣṇa also burned in separation from the *gopis* in His manifest form.

It is said, therefore, that nothing is impossible or astonishing for the Supreme Person, Yasodanandana, who is full of unlimited powers and beyond all conceptions! If Kṛṣṇa as Devakinandana showed such greatness in marrying all the princesses, could He not do much more as Yasodanandana, His most perfect and complete manifestation? All such things perfectly befit the unlimited nature of Kṛṣṇa.

Kavi-karnapura, the son of Sivananda Sena, whose very life is Sri Caitanya, has written this *campu* with a wealth of poetic knowledge. It has arisen by the mercy of Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, and by the pure intelligence attained from remembrance of the lotus feet of Sri Natha.

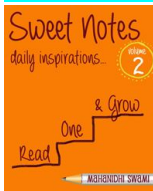
Sri Sri Gandharvika-Giridhari ki jai!

Other books by Author



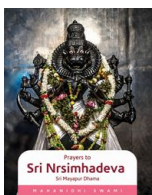
Sweet Notes – 1

Everyone wants happiness, peace and love but few know how to get it. Be all you can be, and more through these practical tips to better living, well being and fulfilment. Topics include: behaviour, compassion, difficulties, family life, old age, hope, karma, patience, success, and 100 more. Now read one and grow.



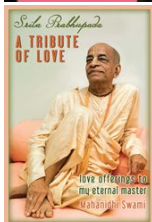
Sweet Notes – 2

Everyone wants happiness, peace and love but few know how to get it. Be all you can be, and more through these practical tips to better living, well being and fulfilment. Topics include: competition, desires, fear, freedom, love, protection, sacrifice, time and 100 more. Now read one and grow.



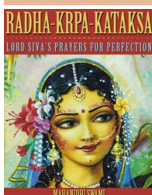
[Prayers to Sri Nrsimhadeva](#)

God comes in many forms to teach, to reform and to love. In this form as Lord Nrsimhadeva – ½ Lion, ½ Man, you will experience His ultimate expression of Divine power and protection. Just read this prayer and see.



[Tribute of Love](#)

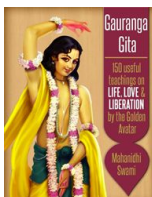
Learn about the true identity of Guru, and how you can love, serve and surrender to your Divine master with all your heart. This helpful little book contains 14 offerings of loving praise expressing a disciple's gratitude, respect and attachment to his eternal guide and friend.



[Radha Krpa Kataksha](#)

This is the most popular prayer in Vrndavana. It was composed by Lord Siva in Sanskrit. With the choicest melodious words, this prayer minutely describes the beautiful sweet form, attributes and divine play of Srimati Radharani. Reciting this prayer will free you from all your problems and quickly grant you the eternal service of Radha and Krsna in the divine realm of Vrndavana.

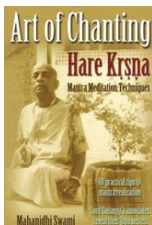
Lord Siva also glorifies Lord Sri Krsna in another prayer in this book entitled Krsna Krpa Kataksha. Reciting both prayers together will definitely fulfill all your pure desires.



[Gauranga Gita](#)

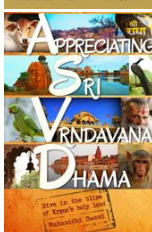
In the Vedas, the ancient seers of truth reveal a prophecy of a Golden Avatara of Love Divine who would descend in India at the beginning of the present age of Kali. The Vedas refer to this Golden Avatara as Sri Krsna Caitanya, and He is the self-same Lord Sri Krsna who spoke the timeless wisdom of the Bhagavad-Gita.

Now in one book you can access the complete teachings of Sri Krsna Caitanya who was affectionately known as Lord Gauranga. Gauranga Gita is a virtual encyclopaedia of Gaudiya Vaisnava philosophy and practices arranged in an alphabetical format. Find out everything Sri Krsna Caitanya said about love, family, God, yoga, meditation, soul, karma, society, liberation, the spiritual world and many more interesting subjects...



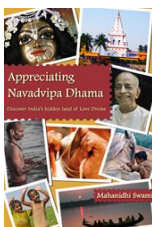
[Art of Chanting Hare Krsna](#)

You can master the science of mantra yoga by practicing the 60 easy yet esoteric techniques described in this book. The chanting of Vedic mantras either in kirtana with music or as japa in solitary contemplation has become very popular the world over. When transcendental mantras are chanted properly, they have the power to transform the consciousness and transport the mind to the highest realm of divine bliss and tranquillity. Read Art of Chanting and learn the process of perfection.



[Appreciating Vrndavana Dhama](#)

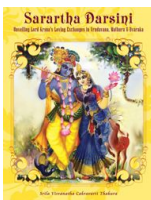
Vedic scriptural references and the author's personal experience of living in Vrndavana for 25 years blend harmoniously together to unravel the sweet charm and hidden mysteries of Lord Krsna's divine play land known as Vrndavana. More than the book, Appreciating Vrndavana Dhama is an enchanting journey wherein you will experience Lord's pastime-filled forests, talking trees, living dust, loving animals, blissful people, the damsels of Vraja, the Divine Couple, the rapture of bhakti, Sri Krsna's love groves, and classic medieval temples. Turn the pages and begin YOUR journey through the land of endless enchantment.



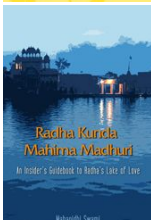
[Appreciating Navadvipa Dhama](#)

Sri Krsna Caitanya, the Golden Avatara of Love appeared in Navadvipa Dhama situated along the Ganges river, West Bengal, India. This book describes the transcendental identity, glories, power and beauty of every feature of this most sacred place on the planet.

[Sarartha Darsini](#)

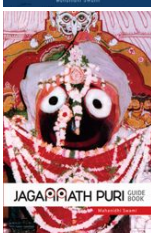


The majesty, magic, power and sweetness of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa's amazing exploits in the forest of Vṛndavana, the city of Mathura and the island paradise of Dvaraka are beautifully portrayed here in this classic book of commentaries on the Tenth Canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam. In Sārathā Darsinī you will hear secret dialogues between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and discover the hidden inner meaning of the divine deeds of the Dark Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.



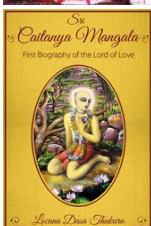
Rādhā Kunda Mahima Madhūrī

The fifty holy places located around Rādhā's fabled lake of love are fully described here. You will discover the prayer huts of the hermits, the tombs of the saints and the temples of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The book is full of fascinating stories about Rādhā and Her loving exchanges with Her beloved Sri Kṛṣṇa. The unique identity and significance of Rādhā-kunda which is the holiest place in Vṛndavana, is fully revealed in this wonderful book.



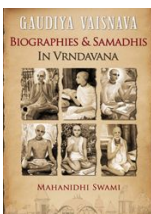
Jagannātha Puri Guide Book

Jagannātha Puri is definitely the most colourful and intriguing of all India's holy places. The book contains in-depth description of all the rites and rituals performed in the ancient temple of Lord Jagannātha. There is also a step by step guide to every holy place inside the massive temple complex and a full description of all the special spots around Puri which are sacred to Lord Jagannātha and to Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. With its maps, location descriptions and 8 planned day trips, this book is a must for every visitor to Jagannātha Puri.



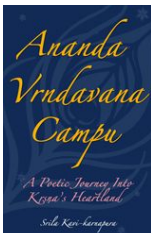
Sri Caitanya Mangalā

This is the oldest biography of Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, the "Golden Avatara of Love" who appeared in India in the 15th century. With flowing beautiful language this book describes the life, teachings and inner ecstasies of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Every incident comes alive as the reader immerses himself in Sri Caitanya's blissful pastimes from His boyhood days to His taking Sannyasa. Like a master musician, Locana Das Thakura uses words to carry one to the land of lila, wherein the Golden Avatara of Love Divine shares the most intimate exchanges with His closest associates. Enter the land of eternal love by turning the pages of this devotional classic!



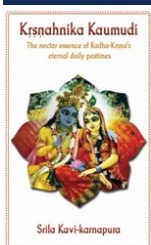
Gaudiya Vaisnava Biographies & Samadhis in Vrndavana

The essential teachings on SPIRITUAL PERFECTION from the lives of 80 Gaudiya Vaisnava Saints are revealed here in this two part book. You will also learn about the hidden truths behind the burial tombs (called Samadhis) of the ascended masters of pure devotion. Find out how to approach the samadhis, how to pray and how to connect with the saints of the past absorbed in Samadhi. For seekers of the essence, looking for a direct experience, this book is a must.



Ananda Vrndavana Campu

This is probably the most poetic and intimate portrayal of Sri Kṛṣṇa's life in Vṛndavana that has ever been written. Five hundred years ago, Sri Kavi Karnapura, the author, was blessed and empowered by Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya to write transcendental literature about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This book overflows with unexcelled charm and wit, and rich metaphorical language in its portrayal of Bhagavan Sri Kṛṣṇa's action-packed, love-filled adventures in blissful Vṛndavana. Guaranteed, this book will be one of the most satisfying and rewarding books you have ever had.

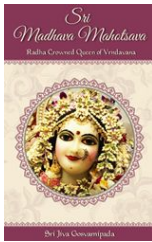


Kṛṣṇāhnikā Kaumudī

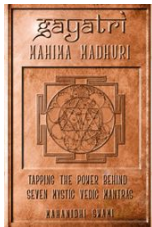
This book is concise, fast-moving, emotive and filled with details, color and fun. Ride the waves of Kavi Karnapura's words into the highest dimensions of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's divine play, Their eternal eight fold daily pastimes (asta-kaliya-lila) wherein love, beauty, sweetness and charm prevail in every thought, word and deed.

Madhava Mahotsava

How did Srimatī Rādhārāṇī become known as Vṛndāvanēśvarī, "Queen of Vṛndavana"? This 16th century classic describes Rādhā's coronation ceremony wherein all the damsels of Vraja and the



celestials of heaven attend the royal ceremony which includes nine luxurious baths and elaborate dressing and decorations. A surprise climax fills all with joy as Bhagavan Sri Krsna suddenly appears to place the symbolic coronation flower garland around the neck of His eternal beloved, the beautiful Sri Radha. Read this wonderful divine play and be transported to a land of joy, a land of mirth and a land of love.



[Gayatri Mahima Madhuri](#)

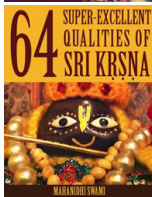
Learn how to tap the power of the secret mantras given by your guru. This book combines an in depth word-by-word analysis and the author's 36 year experience to show you how to unleash the full power, mystery and sweetness of India's most famous seven vedic mystic mantras. Learn today how to properly chant and meditate to realize the magic within the mantras.



[Bhavansara Sangraha](#)

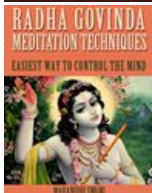
A moment by moment minute description of Radha Krsna's action packed, love-filled activities in the spiritual world. The best parts of all the Gosvami works have been collected here to vividly describe the wonderful eight-fold eternal daily pastimes (asta-kaliya-lila) of Radha-Krsna and all their loving associates in the divine realm of Vrndavana.

This book is a must for anyone who truly wants to know what Radha and Krsna do throughout the day in the spiritual world.



[64 Super Excellent Qualities of Sri Krsna](#)

This little book contains description and example of Lord Sri Krsna's 64 divine qualities. You will learn how to experience God's qualities in your everyday life, and thus become a blissful spiritual being yourself.



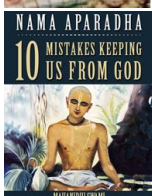
[Radha Govinda Meditations Techniques](#)

This book teaches one the easiest and the most powerful form of meditation. By practicing these meditation techniques you will increase your mental power, experience inner peace and attain a profound vision of God.



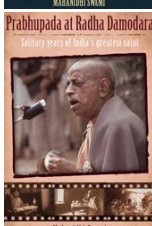
[Sankalpa Kalpadruma](#)

This book transports one to the spiritual realm where eternal life moves joyfully free from the limits of time. Discover the world of serving Radha and Krsna in the enchanting Lord of Love Divine.



[Nama Aparadha](#)

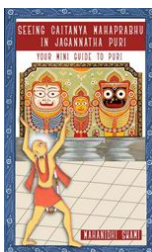
This is the age of light and sound. Magical mantras are everywhere found. But to attain perfection one must not make these ten mistakes. Now learn the way – read and realize.



[Srila Prabhupada at Radha Damodara](#)

Srila Prabhupada the world famous founder of the Hare Krsna movement (ISKCON) lived in seclusion for 6 years before leaving India to spread the teaching of Bhagavan Sri Krsna all over the world. Srila Prabhupada passed his time in Vrndavana in a small room in the medieval temple of Thakura Radha Damodara besides the Yamuna river.

Read about his daily practices, prayers, realizations and profound experience of divinity during those quiet years of introspection and solitary life.



[Seeing Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Puri](#)

This mini spiritual guide takes you in the footsteps Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and shows you each sacred place wherein the Lord of Love (Prema Purushottama) experienced ecstasy in communion with divinity. All the astounding and wondrous activities of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in His exchanges with Lord Jagannatha in Puri are fully described here.